THE POTTERS

J. P. McEvoy

Digitizèd by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/pottersamericanc0000jpmc

RED: We're engaged, you know, and thought maybe—
Act II; Scene IV.—*Page 169*

The Potters

An American Comedy

By

J. P. McEVOY

Foreword by

HEYWOOD BROUN

With Nine Illustrations From Photographs of the Original Production of the Comedy

THE REILLY & LEE CO.
CHICAGO

Copyright, 1923, by J. P. McEvoy. *Copyright, 1924, by* The Reilly & Lee Co. *All rights reserved, including that of translation into foreign languages, including the Scandinavian*

Stage, amateur, and moving-picture rights of The Potters *are owned by* J. P. McEvoy. *No performances of the play or public readings therefrom may be given without his written consent*

Printed in the United States of America

TO EUGENIE

"It Seems to Me"

By Heywood Broun

It was not until I had seen *"The Potters"* for the second time that I began to try to make a picture of J. P. McEvoy in my mind. I had never seen him, so I was not in a position simply to take him for granted. It is true that I was willing enough to dismiss him as a humorous and particularly kindly man who had written one of the best of the year's comedies after I had seen *"The Potters"* only once, but that was chiefly because I had had such a good time at the piece that a good part of its significance had escaped me while I laughed.

Now of course there isn't any better method in the world than that is for dealing in significances. Mr. McEvoy was writing his play for a lot of people, most of them very like the Potter family, and he had the shrewdness to keep anything even approaching a message from showing on the outside. Not that I would suggest here that *"The Potters"* had any message, even on a close inspection. But I have a feeling that those who read this play rather than see it, or who read it after seeing it, will find that its power to stick in the mind, and to foment a very considerable

speculation about its author, rests in this author's philosophy concerning the man inside of all of us.

Whenever any man's philosophy begins to hold your interest, it is an inevitable next step that you will become curious about the man. If a man makes his times, so do his times make him. And McEvoy is so clear an example of an increasing and valuable spirit in the theatre, that I, for one, would like to think that he and his play were very much alike.

The most practical advantage of this would be that it virtually guarantees to us another play as good as *"The Potters,"* and another after that. But the greatest advantage is that it would at least indicate, if it did not prove, that this country is beginning both to demand and to create this kind of man.

I think that McEvoy is a realist. I think he is the sort of stout-hearted truth-teller that American literature, at least American dramatic literature, has languished for the want of, already much too long.

I think we are now in a Renaissance period of the American theatre, and that McEvoy is of it. I like to think that this Renaissance is coming on sturdily, and I know that it is if these plays are not just so many happy accidents.

There are several reasons why I believe that there is nothing accidental about *"The Potters."*

It was precisely these reasons which first set me to wondering about the author.

In the first place, then, McEvoy has written a play not about a certain kind of character, or even of a certain group of characters, but about a certain kind of life. When people come away from *"The Potters"* saying "Why they might be three-fourths of the families I know," that is literally what they mean. It isn't Mr. Potter as a person who engages them, comic and diverting as he is. It is Mr. Potter's life which has been on trial, or, to speak more accurately, under a scrupulous inspection. His is precisely the kind of life that most of us have to lead, whether we like it or not. That is why it is important that McEvoy should be truthful. He has been. He hasn't shirked a single thing. Mr. Potter's home is ugly, and a little messy. He is crowded and jostled on his way to work. His work is without any vestige of dignity or importance. But Mr. Potter's life has this, also, in common with all other lives—it has to be lived. None of us can afford to have him get bored with it, or rebellious against it, except within certain practicable limits. At any rate, we cannot afford to have him foreswear and abandon it. Mr. Potter himself cannot afford to be so low-spirited about his life as even to make himself sick, let alone die.

Now this, in its essentials, is precisely the problem that has always presented itself to the artist:

how to keep the soul of man from becoming either so bored or so lonely that it had to flee before its appointed time.

Probably nobody can escape the conviction that life is ugly and bewildering. But life is also something else. What this something else is has been called by every name imaginable, so that the chances for anybody's being accurate are small, but it is nevertheless extremely important that we should be as accurate as we can.

I have called McEvoy a realist partly because he does not try to pretend that the life of the Potters is any better than it is, but more because he seems to me to be so truthful in this matter of life's saving grace. He does not try to foist on us any conviction that anything can come along and make Mr. Potter's life actually better. What he does say is that about once in so often Mr. Potter will be attacked by a sort of divine lunacy, and will go out and buy an oil well, or throw some other grotesque anchor to windward, and will be revived by it, whether it is successful or not. He says further that Mr. Potter cannot help doing this. He says that the human spirit has its systolic system of refreshment as involuntary as the body's heart, and that it can and must be trusted.

Once upon a time, man's duty to the race was fairly measured by the amount he could add to the total of man's usable environment. It had to

be measured in miles. Now the miles are measured, and the maps are made. But the explorers cannot stop. There are ourselves still to be understood. McEvoy has pried into us. He has brought back one authentic story. His place is waiting, for his next return.

ORIGINAL CAST
OF
THE POTTERS

As first presented at The Plymouth Theatre, New York, December Eighth, 1923.

MA POTTER.....CATHERINE CALHOUN DOUCET
BILL POTTER.....RAYMOND GUION
MAMIE POTTER.....MARY CARROLL
PA POTTER.....DONALD MEEK
RED MILLER.....DOUGLASS HUNTER
GLADYS RANKIN.....MARY STILLS
FRIEND .....TOM BURTON
MR. RANKIN.....EDWIN WALTER
MR. EAGLE.....DEAN RAYMOND
CONDUCTOR.....R. HENRY HANDON
MOTORMAN.....WILLIAM FAIRCHILD
MEDIUM.....JOSEPHINE DEFFRY
MEDIUM'S DAUGHTER.....JOSEPHINE MOSTLER
ICEMAN.....RUSS CARTER
WAITER.....DANIEL KELLY
CHECK ROOM GIRL.....ADELAIDE LAWRENCE
MRS. RANKIN.....MAUD COOLING

PULLMAN PORTER.....JAMES HAGEN

BILL.....DANIEL KELLY

MIKE.....TOM BURTON

GIRL'S VOICE.....DOROTHY DEUEL

BOY'S VOICE.....ARTHUR CHRISTIAN

MR. PETERSON.....RAPHAEL BYRNES

MRS. PETERSON.....ISABEL HILL

MECHANIC.....RUSS CARTER

JACK.....RAPHAEL BYRNES

ANABELLE.....HELEN CHANDLER

PASSENGERS—Jane Atherton, Frances Chandler, Peggy O'Reilly, Jean Woods, Suzanne Powers, Dorothy Deuel, Josephine Mostler, Eleanor Deuel, Lillian Martin, Margaret H. Blair, Marguerite Ammann.

Characters

MA POTTER.....Plump, middle aged housefrau, inclined to have her own way—pleasantly, if possible.

BILL POTTER.....Nineteen, blond, wise-crackin', hard to manage, but essentially a good lad.

MAMIE POTTER.....Twenty-two, dark, up to the minute in slang and style, a wholesome, modern daughter of the house.

PA POTTER.....Typical, middle aged, hundred per cent American family man—always trying, but somewhat baffled by the comic futilities of life.

RED MILLER.....Athletic, college football type, — ex-life guard and prospective son-in-law.

GLADYS RANKIN.....Blond daughter of neighbor next door, about the same age as Mamie.

FRIEND.....One of those street car philosophers, sees all, knows all.

RANKIN.....Pa Potter's neighbor and associate in business. Typical, smart, up-and-at-'em, go-get 'em business man. Too shrewd for Pa.

EAGLE.....Promoter for the Tennessee Oil & Investment Company. "Oily" describes him.

CONDUCTOR.....Just a conductor.

MOTORMAN.....Just a motorman.

MEDIUM.....Middle aged dark woman with shrewd eyes and a hollow voice.

MEDIUM'S DAUGHTER. Like everybody else's daughter.

ICEMAN.....Like your own.

WAITER..... Pathetic, tired, flat-footed. An air of crushed futility. Strives to please.

CHECK-ROOM GIRL.... Try to get by her with your hat.

MRS. RANKIN..... About the same age as Ma, but refuses to grow old gracefully. Face almost too new and fresh—suggests "Wet Paint." Fussy, over-dressed, feather-brained.

PULLMAN PORTER.... The regular article, named George, of course.

BILL..... A driller. He bores oil wells and oil wells bore him.

MIKE..... Helps Bill but has hopes. Seen oil once.

A BOY'S VOICE.....

A GIRL'S VOICE.....

MRS. PETERSON..... She quarrels with Mr. Peterson.

MR. PETERSON..... He quarrels with Mrs. Peterson.

MECHANIC..... The kind who tells you you can never have your car the same day.

JACK..... The fellow you see in any garage trying to revive the corpse of a Ford.

ANABELLE..... Bill's girl and stenographer to Pa and Rankin. Just a real good kid.

TIME: The Present

PLACE: Your Neighborhood

THE POTTERS

ACT I.

SCENE I:	Potter Dining Room.
SCENE II:	Street Car, Interior.
SCENE III:	Madam Kyra's Parlor.
SCENE IV:	Max's Business Lunch.
SCENE V:	Potter Living Room.

ACT II.

SCENE I:	Pullman.
SCENE II:	Oil Field.
SCENE III:	Potter Porch.
SCENE IV:	Potter Living Room.

ACT III.

SCENE I:	Roadside Garage.
SCENE II:	Potter Office.
SCENE III:	Potter Living Room.

CURTAIN

THE POTTERS

ACT I.

THE POTTERS

ACT I: SCENE I.

[*SCENE: Breakfast time. The dining room in the* Potter *apartment, a typical little tasteless but painfully striving breakfast room; obviously arranged by a dumbbell. The table is set for four. A victrola, with telephone atop, at the right.*

At the rise of the curtain Ma *enters through swinging door from the kitchen, carrying a platter of bacon and eggs, and one boiled egg in a cup. She is in apron and boudoir cap, and evidently not in the best of humor.*]

Ma

[*Calling in hall as if to someone upstairs*]: Hurry up, will you? Everything's gettin' cold. William! Come to breakfast. Mamie! Pa! Will you come to breakfast? Everything's gettin' cold.

[*Back to the kitchen she goes, returning with plate of toast. Who is this?* Bill, *sure enough.*]

BILL

[*Entering from hall*]: Hello, Ma!

MA

Every day it's the same old story. Can't get you to bed at night. Can't get you up in the morning.

BILL

[*Throwing hat and coat down on* MAMIE's *chair*]: Got anything to eat? [*Looks over table critically.*] Bacon and eggs! Gosh a-mighty, Ma, can't you think o' nothin' but bacon and eggs?

MA

[*Snappily*]: Eat your breakfast, young man, and be thankful for what you get. There's lots of people'd be glad to have bacon and eggs. [*And out she goes again.*]

BILL

They can have mine. [*Attacking food.*]

Where's Mamie? Lucky Red don't see her in the morning before she does all them things to her face.

MA

[*Coming back from kitchen with pot of coffee*]: When I was her age I didn't loll around in bed until all hours in the morning, either.

BILL

I suppose they just had to hold you down to keep you from jumpin' right out of bed in the morning when you was a girl.

MA

Eat your breakfast and don't talk so much. [*Enter* MAMIE *briskly, and all dolled up.*]

MAMIE

Hello, Ma. [*To* BILL]: Hello, Valentino.

BILL

[*Sarcastically*]: What's the big idea of the dress parade? New man down at the office?

MAMIE

What does a shrimp like you know about dresses?

BILL

You oughtn't to stand in the light with that thing.

MAMIE

Why?

BILL

You're showin' the family skeleton.

MA

William! Such language!

BILL

Aw, she makes me sick.

MAMIE

[*Picks up* BILL's *hat and coat and drops them on the floor.*] Learn to hang up your things. [*Sits.*]

MA

[*Picking up hat and coat*]: It's a wonder the lot of you wouldn't learn to hang up your things. I'm always bendin' my back pickin' up after you. Pa! Are you ever coming to breakfast? Everything's gettin' cold.

BILL

Hurry up, Pa, everything's gettin' cold.

MAMIE

Pa, your breakfast is gettin' cold.

PA

[*And now comes* PA, *at last, tugging at his tie*]: These darn ties are always gettin' caught on the back collar button.

BILL

You don't need a back collar button. It's habit, that's all. I never wear one.

PA

Say, I don't need any advice from you on how to dress, young feller. I was wearin' back collar buttons when all you was wearin' was talcum powder an' safety pins.

MAMIE

I guess that will hold you, smart Aleck.

MA

Pa, don't be indecent. You should show your children a good example.

PA

What's indecent about that? Gee whiz! Lookit this shirt. That's what I call indecent. Lookit them cuffs. Lookit the neck here. No wonder they call them machines in the laundry "manglers".

BILL

Ha! Joke!

PA

What am I to do about these cuffs. I can't go down town with cuffs like this. A man's got to make a good appearance in business.

MA

Turn 'em. Nobody'll know the difference.

PA

Can't you get me another shirt?

MA

No, I can't. I don't know where they are just now.

PA

[*Looking around table and back into hall*]: Where's the paper? Get me the paper.

MA

Say, you don't want a wife . . . . You want a caddy. [*Nothing left for* PA *to do but go after the paper himself.*] It's a wonder he wouldn't eat his breakfast without the paper once.

BILL

Pa wouldn't know what to think for the day unless he read it in the morning.

MAMIE

Oh, I forgot to call Red.

BILL

Gosh, can't you let the poor fellow alone?

MAMIE

Why, he asked me to call him to let him know if he could drop in and pick me up going down town this morning.

BILL

Don't the poor fish know by this time that you'd let him take you anywhere?
[MAMIE *gives him a dirty look and goes to phone.*]

MAMIE

Graceland 8976!

BILL

With all the girls in the world to pick from I can't understand why he ever fell for you.
[PA *has found his paper and here he comes.*]

MAMIE

Yes—hello—Oh, is this you, Red? Hello, dearest. Is it tired after its big night?

BILL

[*Mimicking*]: Is it tired after its big night?
[*To* PA]: When a girl get engaged she goes plumb nuts. Don't she make you sick?

PA

[*Behind paper*]: Bluh—bluh—bluh.

MAMIE

Say, honey, will you drop in and pick me up on your way down town? . . . Yes, I'm eatin' breakfast now— Yes . . . All right . . . Good-bye, dear.

BILL

[*As* MAMIE *returns*]: Good-bye, dear. Why don't you marry the poor fish and get over the agony.

PA

[*Looking up*]: Who, Red? Say, when she marries I want her to get somebody that can support her. I don't want any more feet under this table. Huh!

MAMIE

[*Defiantly*]: Don't you *huh* Red.

BILL

Never mind, Pa. Ev'ry man has a right to starve a wife if he can get one. [*Reaches across table and spears last piece of bacon.*] Come to Papa.

MAMIE

Pig! Why don't you save some of your politeness for the home. You shoulda seen him last night, Ma, you wouldn't have known it was the same Bill.

MA

Where did you see him?

BILL

[*Interrupting, nervously*]: Her and Red came into the Blue Mill Garden last night when I was there.

MAMIE

When *you* was there? You and who else?

BILL

What's that to you?

MA

Who was with you? George?

MAMIE

George? Ha! Ha!

BILL

Think you're cute, don't you?

MAMIE

Ma, you shoulda seen the helpless looking dame he had with him.

BILL

I guess you think Red's a collar ad or somep'n. The way he stumbles around the floor. I never seen such a simp.

MAMIE

[*Mimicking*]: "I never seen"— why don't you say, "dees, dem, doze"—Say, if you could dance like Red you'd be a stepper.

BILL

He wasn't payin' any attention to you anyway. He was lookin' at Gladys Rankin ev'ry chance he could get.

MAMIE

[*Furious*]: That's not so.

BILL

Oh, yes it is. I saw him winking at her.

MAMIE

That's a lie.

BILL

Oh, naughty, naughty!

MAMIE

Well, you didn't have much to look at, anyway. Where did you get that Dumb Dora?

BILL

[*Now equally furious*]: Dumb Dora? How d'ye get that way? Anabelle's a darn nice little girl.

MAMIE

Oh, Anabelle, eh? Nice little girl! What does she want with a child like you? Taking you to raise? Cradle robber!

BILL

Zat so?

PA

Anabelle? That ain't the stenographer in my office is it?

BILL

[*Meekly and hesitantly*]: Yes, Pa.

PA

So that's why we can't keep you down in the shippin' room. You leave her alone in business hours, anyway, or I'll have you both fired.

MAMIE

What time did you get in last night, Valentino?

BILL

None of your darn business.

MAMIE

If I was out as late as you ev'ry night, I'd get a milk wagon and make some money on my way home—

BILL

Say, you and Red don't break no speed records gettin' home nights.

MAMIE

Absolutely, Mister Gallagher.

BILL

And then you hang around on the porch 'til the the neighbors think you're burglars.

MAMIE

Positively, Mister Shean.

MA

[*With an apprehensive glance at* PA]: Now children, stop your fighting.

PA

[*Looks at* BILL]: What time did you get in last night, young man? [*Struggles with opening of soft boiled egg—they can be quite difficult at times.*]

BILL

[*Squirming*]: I don't remember. My watch stopped.

PA

Well, mine didn't. How long do you think I'm gonna stand you comin' in all hours of the night? What do you think I'm runnin' here—sort of a community center or somep'n?

BILL

[*Rattled*]: Yes, Pa.

PA

What?

BILL

No, Pa.

PA

You're gonna stop runnin' the streets nights. You're gonna be home and in bed by ten o'clock ev'ry night.

BILL

Gee whiz, Pa! You treat me like I was a baby or somep'n.

PA

None of your lip.

MA

[*To* BILL]: Pa's right. One hour of sleep before midnight is worth three after. Besides you'll ruin your health.

BILL

Aw, my health. I'd trade a little health for a little fun any day.

PA

None of your lip, young man. You're gonna start keepin' regular hours in this house and you're gonna start to-night.

BILL

[*Aghast*]: But I got a date to-night to go to a swell hop.

PA

You've got a date to stay home and hop in a swell bed.

BILL

[*Rebelliously*]: Gee, none of the other fellows are cooped up in the house like me. You let Mamie go out. I don't see why I can't go out if I behave myself. All the other fellows are goin' to that dance to-night. They got dress suits, too. You won't even get me a dress suit. It's a darn outrage, that's what it is.

PA

Oh, it is, is it? Outrage, huh? I'll dress suit you if I catch you comin' in at two o'clock in the morning again.

BILL

But Pa, I gotta go to-night. I just gotta.

PA

None of your lip.

MA

Come on, eat your breakfast. Everything's gettin' cold.

BILL

[*Wailing*]: Aw, gee whiz.

MAMIE

Who's gonna take Anabelle to the dance tonight? She'll miss you, Bill. So polite, pushin' in her chair for her an' holdin' her coat. You wouldn't have known him, Pa, he acted almost human last night.

BILL

Say, you was the hot sketch. Smirkin' at that silly hick and battin' your eyes. [*Imitates her.*] Lookin' up at him like an owl with the colic.

PA

Cut the battling, will you?

BILL

Everyone was lookin' at you the way you were dancin' with him. Expectin' every minute to see you disappear inside of his coat and vest.

MA

Why, William, how you talk!

PA

Say, can't I eat one breakfast in peace around here? This ain't a home. It's a lion house.

MA

Well, why don't you put the paper down and talk to us? Can't you read down town.

PA

[*Ignoring her*]: Hump! Listen to this: "There are more people engaged in caring for defective teeth than in relieving any other human ailment." [*Holds up burnt toast*]: That's the answer. Think of the hundreds of thousands of American families breakin' their teeth ev'ry morning on the toast.

MAMIE

Ma makes toast like the little girl who said the way to make toast was to burn it till it's black and then scrape it off in the sink.

MA

[*Indignantly*]: Well, if I didn't have to do every hand's turn around here . . . . this isn't a

hotel anyway . . . . if your father was like Rankin I'd have a maid. [*Glares at* Pa *accusingly.*]

Pa

[*Stirred*]: Rankin! Rankin! [*Stares suddenly at item in paper and whistles*]: Whew! Listen to this. "Oil Company cuts melon. Four hundred per cent dividend paid to stockholders of Oklahoma Oil Company—"

Ma

[*Interrupting*]: I wish you had some of it. Maybe then I could have a maid.

Bill

I thought all that oil stock was apple sauce.

Pa

A lot you know about it. It's right here in the paper. Four hundred per cent. Gee! I wish I had some of that stock.

Ma

I wish you had, too. Maybe we could have a maid then. I don't see how the Rankins can afford a maid and we can't.

PA

[*Peevishly*]: Rankins, Rankins!

MA

Rankin don't make any more than you do, does he? You're both workin' down there in the same office, aren't you?

PA

[*Cornered*]: Well, he makes a little more but that's because he's always yessin' the boss. But me, I'm different. When I don't like a thing I sing right out. Only the other day the boss came up to my desk to ask my advice about somep'n and he says, "Potter, I want to ask your advice about somep'n" . . . .

MA

It's about time you were getting a raise or somep'n. [PA *collapses.*] I'm sick of apologizin' to installment collectors. Rankin has just got a raise. Mrs. Rankin told me so.

PA

Well, if he did, he got it by yessin' the boss.

MA

Well then, yes the boss, if that's what gets raises. I tell you right now, Peter E. Potter, you got to do somep'n pretty soon besides talk. I'm tired of hearin' about what a great hero you are down at the office! You seem to be a hero down there ev'ry day except pay day. [*With which wifely remark she disappears into kitchen.*]

PA

All right, all right, I wish you'd quit naggin' me about money. I guess I could get more if I wanted to be a four-flusher and a yesser, like Rankin. But that ain't the way I do business. [*Bravely talks to closed kitchen door*]: I believe in standin' right up for your rights and havin' the courage of your convictions. Why should any hundred per cent American be afraid to say what he thinks?

BILL

Atta boy, Pop!

MA

[*Coming back*]: Well, when am I goin' to get a maid like Mrs. Rankin?

PA

Rankin! Rankin! Give me a rest about Rankin. When I think the time's ripe for a raise I'll go in and demand it—

MA

Huh!

PA

Yes sir, demand it! [*Gestures excitedly with cup of coffee.*]

MA

Demand it! Pooh! You think they couldn't get along down there without you. You've told me so yourself. Then why don't you get more money?

PA

They can't get along without me and they know it, too. But they won't admit it. But if they don't come through pretty handsome one of these days, I'll walk right out on them and leave the place flat on its back.

BILL

Atta boy, Pop!

MA

The Rankins have just got a new car—a sedan—she was driving round and round the block all day yesterday. Huh! She's gettin' fatter every day.

PA

[*Innocently*]: Why I thought she was gettin' thinner.

MA

[*In disappointed surprise*]: Oh, you did, did you? And yet you didn't notice that I'd lost three pounds this month.

PA

[*Who has gone back to his paper, replying absently*]: No, did you?

MAMIE

I don't see why we can't have a new car if the Rankins can afford one.

PA

Say, I'm sick of hearin' about the Rankins.

MA

She's got a new suite for the living room, too. Wants us to come over and see it to-morrow evening. About eight o'clock.

MAMIE

She's pretty foxy. Eight o'clock—that's so she won't have to get dinner for us.

BILL

I heard Rankin is gonna send Gladys to college this fall. Same one Red's going to. Better say good-bye to Red, Mamie. They'll be studyin' together. All sorts of things like Loveology and Kissics—[*Makes kissing noise.*]

MAMIE

Is that so? Gladys is my best friend.

BILL

She'll be Red's best friend, too. They'll be doin' laboratory exercises together and home-work—Ha! Ha! At Gladys' home. Ha! Ha!

PA

Hey, cut it out. Ma, give me 'nother cup of coffee.

MA

[*Pours coffee*]: You shouldn't drink so much coffee. It'll make you nervous.

PA

Nervous! Say, if this place wouldn't make a man nervous, coffee won't.

MAMIE

What time you got, Pa?

PA

[*Studies watch, holds it to ear.*] I think I'm five minutes fast or somep'n. I've got seven thirty.

MA

Seven thirty! [*To* MAMIE]: Hurry, you'll miss that car at seven forty-three.

MAMIE

I'm not going to the office to-day. I'm not feeling well.

MA

Well, you can stay home and help me a little with the work.

BILL

Work? Ha! Ha!

MAMIE

Laugh and show your ignorance. Gladys was telling me of a wonderful medium. I'm going to see her to-day, Ma. She's just wonderful. She can tell you things you only know yourself.

BILL

Tellin' you everything you know won't take her all day.

PA

That's all superstition. I don't believe in superstition. [*Clòses paper and rises, spilling salt. Instinctively takes pinch and throws it over left shoulder.*] Superstition is ignorance, that's what it is.

MA

You'd better hurry, Pa, you'll be late. [PA *folds the paper and sticks it in his pocket.*] Leave the paper here and get another one on your way down town.

PA

[*Throws paper on table, regretfully*]: Oh, very well.

[Pa *is putting on his hat. During the following dialogue* Pa *and* Ma *are going toward street door.* Bill *evidently is waiting for them to get out of hearing so he can talk to* Mamie.]

Ma

Whaddye want for supper, Pa?

Mamie

[*Correctingly*]: Dinner, Ma, dinner.

Pa

Gosh, when a fella's just finished breakfast how can he think of what he wants for supper—er, dinner. How about er . . . . er . . . . roast beef?

Ma

We had roast beef last night.

Pa

Well, pork chops.

Ma

We had pork chops night before last.

Pa

All right, all right, suit yourself. [*Brightly*]: How about a good steak?

MA

[*Disgusted*]: Steak! We had steak three times last week.

PA

[*Desperately*]: All right, then, all right. Fried eagle. Don't bother me. Goo bi'. [*Gives* MA *perfunctory peck on cheek.*]

MA

Hurry, Pa, you'll be late. [*Follows him out.*]

BILL

Listen Mame, I gotta take Anabelle to that dance to-night, I just gotta.

MAMIE

Pa'll break your neck.

BILL

An' I gotta have a dress suit, too. [*Suddenly struck by idea*]: Say, Pa's'll fit me. Do you know where he keeps it?

MAMIE

Sure. What are you gonna do?

BILL

Listen, you swipe it for me and put it in my room, and to-night after supper I'll watch my chance and sneak out in it.

MAMIE

If Pa catches you, you'll be dressed for your funeral.

BILL

Say, I told Anabelle I'm gonna take her to that dance to-night and I'm gonna take her.

MAMIE

Attaboy! Never weaken, the first hundred girls are the hardest.

BILL

Will you help me?

MAMIE

Sure. Red's takin' me there to-night, too. It's gonna be a large evening.

BILL

[*To* MAMIE, *as* MA *re-enters*]: Don't forget. 'Bi, Ma. S'long Mame. Wait a minute, Pa. [*Rushes out.*]

[*The door bell rings.*]

MAMIE

There, that's Red.
[MA *lets in* GLADYS RANKIN *and* RED MILLER.]

GLADYS

How d'ye do, Mrs. Potter? Hello, Mamie.

RED

'Lo, Mamie. 'Lo, Ma.

MA

Hello, there! [*Goes out with* PA's *cup and saucer.*]

MAMIE

[*Evidently surprised to see* RED *and* GLADYS *come in together*]: Why—why—hello!

GLADYS

Oh, I was comin' in to pick you up on my way down town and I ran into Red.

RED

Oh, yes, yes, we ran into each other outside. Quite a coincidence, huh?

MAMIE

[*A trifle coldly*]: Yes, quite.

RED

[*Blissfully unaware of her jealousy*]: Yeh, we ran into her last night and then run into her again this morning. [*Turns to* GLADYS]: Will I see you at the dance to-night?

GLADYS

[*Coquettishly*]: I'll say you will.

MA

[*Enters from kitchen*]: Out early, aren't you Gladys?

GLADYS

Yes, I got a lot of shopping to do down town. Are you going to wear that blue dress to-night, Mamie?

MAMIE

Oh no, I'm going to give everybody a surprise to-night.

RED

C'mon, if you're goin' down town.

MAMIE

Just a minute 'til I telephone the boss. [*Telephoning as* MA *goes back to kitchen with sugar bowl*]: Randolph 3800. Yes, that's right. [*To* GLADYS]: I'm not going to the office to-day. I'm gonna see that clairvoyant.

GLADYS

O-ooh, that's swell. She's the spookiest thing. [*To* RED]: She just knows everything.

MAMIE

[*Through telephone*]: Hello . . . Randolph 3800? . . . let me talk to Mr. Clampitt, please . . . hello . . . hello . . . Mr. Clampitt? [*In sickly, but sweetly honied tones*]: This is Miss Potter speaking. I'm awf'ly sick to-day . . . yes, awf'ly sick—[RED *and* GLADYS *look at each other and smile*] headache, yes headache. I don't think I'll be down to-day. Yes, I'll be down to-morrow, I hope. Yes, that's awf'ly sweet of you . . . thank you very much . . .good-bye. [*Turning to* RED *and* GLADYS *and in clear, hearty voice*]: There, that's settled. Wait 'till I get my hat and coat and I'll be right with you.

MAMIE: I'm awf'ly sick to-day.
Act I; Scene I.—*Page 34*

RED

Wait, I'll go with you. [*They go out together.*] [MA *re-enters from kitchen.*]

GLADYS

You're lookin' fine, Mrs. Potter. Aren't you gettin' thinner?

MA

[*Beaming*]: I believe I am. You know I'm doin' those exercises to music. You've heard of 'em, haven't you?

GLADYS

Oh yes, of course. Mother has 'em.

MA

And Mr. Potter was just sayin' how much thinner she was getting. They must be wonderful. Look what it says in the circular—[*Takes folder from under cushion and reads*]: "Beauty is a woman's right. The woman who did not desire to be attractive to others would not be normal."

GLADYS

The man's right.

MA

[*Continues*]: "If a woman be stout her first step toward beauty must be the natural disposal of excess fat. Read what Mrs. Geesemyer has to say: 'Have done nicely during the time I have devoted to your remarkable course. So far I have lost 53 pounds'."

GLADYS

I'd say she was doing nicely.

MA

[*Reading*]: And here is what Mrs. Emmy Looses writes: "I have lost 30 pounds and feel like a different person. My husband said—

RED

[*Shouting from outside*]: Hurry up, Mamie!

MA

Sh-h, here's Mamie. She doesn't know about it. Don't say anything to her. [*Hides circular.* RED *enters.*] Why—why, where's Mamie?

RED

[*Flustered*]: Oh, she went upstairs to fix her hair.

GLADYS

[*Laughs.*] Ah—ha— Treat 'em rough!
[MA *makes another trip to the kitchen.*]

RED

Never you mind, now. When are you going to get Mamie's size for me?

GLADYS

When she comes back. Gonna get her a platinum settin'?

RED

Platinum all over! Say, when I get engaged I make 'em like it. Here comes Mamie now. Let's see—which finger did you say?
[GLADYS *shows engagement finger.*]

RED

Are you sure?

GLADYS

Sure I'm sure.

MAMIE

[*Suspiciously*]: Sure of what?

GLADYS

Will we tell her?

RED

I should say not. She'll find out soon enough.

MAMIE

Say, what are you two talking about?

RED

Nothin'. Let me see your hand a minute—aw, come on Mamie, let's see your hand? [*Takes it.*]

MAMIE

What's that got to do with it.

RED

What's that got to do with what?

MAMIE

What you were just sayin' to Gladys.

RED

I wasn't sayin' anything to Gladys. Was I, Gladys?
[*Takes* GLADYS' *hand and compares both.*]

GLADYS

[*Laughs—demurely*]: No, you weren't sayin' anything to me. That is, I don't think you were.

RED

Gee! Your little finger is crooked!

GLADYS

Yeh, ain't that funny? I get it from Dad—

MAMIE

I hope you're havin' a good time.

MA

[*Coming back*]: Tell me what the fortune teller has to say, Mamie. And you might ask her what's good for a dull pain in the back.

MAMIE

Why, Ma, she's a fortune teller, not an osteopath.

MA

I guess you'll have too much to ask her about Red to bother about me.

GLADYS

[*Cooing*]: Is she worried about Red?

MAMIE

Who? Me? I can see myself worryin' about any man. Any old day. [*Pushes* GLADYS *to door*]: Good-bye, Ma. I'll lunch down town. That'll save you some work. [*Looks to* RED *for applause, and goes.*]

RED

[*To* MA, *as he goes out*]: Isn't she thoughtful?

MA

Yes, girls are a great help these days.
[*Now they are all gone and the coast is clear.* MA *removes her apron and goes to phonograph and puts on lesson record on how to reduce.*]

PA

[*Entering hurriedly*]: I forgot something. Lemme see. What is it? [*Looks around, sees paper on table and his eyes light up*]: Ah, there it is.
[*Jams paper into pocket and goes out.*]

MA

Did you get what you were lookin' for?

PA

Yes. Goo' bi'.

[MA *again takes up position by phonograph, ready to continue her reducing exercises.*]

VOICE FROM MACHINE

Hands out, knees stiff, ready—begin—one—two —one—two—

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE II.

[*SCENE: Interior of street car; same morning. Time, 7:45. In the center of the long seat sits* Red, *and to his left, in order, sits* Gladys; Girl *reading book;* Young Clerk; Rankin *and* Eagle. To Red's *right sits* Mamie; Mechanic, *with lunch pail; a working man and a waiter in street clothes.*

Pa *is standing, sandwiched in between four girls. All the men are reading papers and all the women are chewing gum.*

Pa Potter *is hanging to strap and trying to read his paper. The crowd pushes him along from strap to strap.*]

Conductor's Voice

Let 'em off. Let 'em off. Watchyu step.

Mamie

[*To* Red *and* Gladys, *who are scheming happily*]: I hope I am not intruding.

Red

Now don't be silly.

MAMIE

[*Flaring up*]: Silly? Who's silly? [*Pause*]: I hope you're having a good time.

GLADYS

The time of my life. But wait until to-night. Oh, boy!

MAMIE

Who's taking you to the dance to-night?

GLADYS

Haven't made up my mind yet. Thought maybe you'd lend me Red!

RED

I think I'll take both of you. I could dance with one of you and sit out with the other.

CONDUCTOR

Stepinsideplentyaroomupinfront.

RED

You change at the next corner for that medium.

MAMIE

You're coming with me, aren't you?

RED

[*Looking at* GLADYS]: Why—er—no—we—I mean I—er—er—er—I've got something to do down town, very important.

MAMIE

[*Rising and regarding them haughtily*]: Very well, suit yourself. Just for that I won't tell you what the medium tells me.

CONDUCTOR

Watchya step.

MAMIE

[*Hurrying out*]: Good-bye, see you to-night.

RED AND GLADYS

Good-bye, good-bye.

RED

[*To* GLADYS]: She never got wise.

PA

[*Behind paper, bumps into man whom he recognizes*]: Well, well, hello there! [*They shake hands.*]

FRIEND

Hello yourself, what's the good word?

PA

Oh, I don't know, waddye know?

FRIEND

Oh, nothing much, how goes it?

PA

Just so so. How goes it with you.

FRIEND

Just about the same. Waddye doin' now, huh?

PA

Oh, just about the same. Waddye doin', huh?

FRIEND

Just about the same. [*Both pause, somewhat baffled.*]

CONDUCTOR

Plentyroomupinfront. C'mon, step lively.

PA

Well, well, you're lookin' good.

FRIEND

Oh, I'm feelin' pretty good.

PA

Yeh, you're lookin' pretty good.

FRIEND

Yeh, I'm feelin' pretty good. How is it by you?

PA

Oh, so so, can't complain.

FRIEND

Well, you're lookin' pretty good.

CONDUCTOR

C'mon, stepinside, plentyroomupfront.

[GIRL, *also* BILL *and* ANABELLE *enter. More people jam in, crowding against speakers who are jammed with noses almost touching.*]

PA

[*Indicating place on* FRIEND'S *paper*]: They're plannin' a new Arms' Conference, I see.

FRIEND

Yes, they're always havin' a Conference about somep'n. They won't do nothin' 'cept talk.

PA

Yeh, just talk, that's where they shine.

FRIEND

You said it.

PA

I'll say I did.

FRIEND

You sure did.

PA

I'll say. I tell you right now, if I was runnin' things they'd get down to business, 'stead of sittin' aroun' an' gassin' about it. I'd say "Lookit here, gen'lemen, let's get down to brass tacks. Are you goin' to disarm or ain't you, huh? If you are, then do it and stop gassin' about it. If you ain't, take your hats and go home, but remember one thing—old Uncle Sam can build as just as many ships as you can. Yes sir, twice as many, and we've got just as much ocean to sail 'em

aroun' in as you have, and if you want to start buildin' ships against your Uncle Samuel we'll stick with you until we run out of ocean to float 'em in." How's that?

FRIEND

That's the talk. That's tellin' 'em.

PA

Yes sir, that's what I'd tell 'em, believe me. None o' this gassin' aroun' an' beatin' aroun' the bush if I was runnin' things, I'll tell you that right now, believe me.

FRIEND

You said somep'n that time.

PA

I'll say I did.

FRIEND

You sure did.

PA

I'll say. I'd tell 'em flat. Lookit here, I'd say, this is this and that's that. That's all there is, there isn't any more. Take it or leave it. There

she lays. The cards are on the table. Put up or shut up. I'd tell 'em. Believe me. But those birds we have in Washington, they do nothin' but talk.

FRIEND

That's right. That's all they do, talk.

PA

I'll say that's all they do, just talk.

FRIEND

You said somep'n.

PA

I'll say I did.

FRIEND

You sure did.

PA

I'll say. Talk, that's all they do.

CONDUCTOR

[*Shouting unintelligibly*]: Blah, blahblahblah!

FRIEND

Oh, he's calling my street. S'long. [*Shaking hands.*]

PA POTTER: I'll say! I'd tell 'em flat.
Act I; Scene II.—*Page 49*

PA

Well, so'long, glad I seen you again.

[GLADYS *and* RED *exit and their seats are taken by man and woman. Left of them* EAGLE *rises.*]

FRIEND

Yeh, glad I seen you, too.

PA

Well, s'long.

FRIEND

[*Laughing*]: S'long, don't take any wooden nickels.

PA

Ha! ha! Don't worry about me.

FRIEND

Ha! ha! guess I needn't at that, huh?

PA

I'll say you needn't.

FRIEND

Well, s'long, see you in church.

PA

Yeh, see you in church. S'long.

FRIEND

S'long.

[PA *bumps into* RANKIN *at last bell.*]

RANKIN

Hello, there, Potter.

PA

Hello, Rankin. What's the good word?

RANKIN

Oh, nothin' much.

PA

How's Mrs. Rankin?

RANKIN

Oh, she's all right.

PA

Thass good. [*Scrutinizes* RANKIN'S *paper*]: Did you see where they're tryin' to keep all the foreigners outta this country?

RANKIN

[*Turning over paper*]: It's a good idear, don't you think so?

PA

Sure, it's a good idear. We've got too many people in here now without importin' any more of 'em.

RANKIN

I guess that's right.

PA

Still where are we gonna get our foreign labor if we don't import 'em?

RANKIN

That's right. You're right. Say, do you know Mr. Eagle here? Meet Mr. Potter, Mr. Eagle.

EAGLE

This is a great pleasure, I assure you.

PA

Glad to meetcha.

EAGLE

I've heard a lot about you, Mr. Potter.

PA

Yeh? Thass good.

EAGLE

I was interested in what you was sayin' about immigration, Mr. Potter. I think you're absolutely right. We've got to have labor, don't we?

PA

Sure thing we gotta have labor.

CONDUCTOR

Move up—plentyofroomupinfront!

[*More people are jammed into car to the discomfort of all.*]

RANKIN

Quit your shovin', will you, get off my feet.

PA

Yes, get off my feet.

RANKIN

They jam us in here like sardines.

PA

Sardines have the best of it—they don't have to stand up. Too many people in this country now

and you wantin' to import more of 'em. Still we gotta have labor to develop our industries, don't we, our coal and steel?

EAGLE

And the oil industry, gentlemen. Where will you go to get the return on your investment that oil will give you? Look at Rockefeller.

PA

You said somethin' that time. I was just readin' in the paper this morning—[*turns to place and reads*]: "Oil company cuts melon. Four hundred per cent dividend paid to stockholders of Oklahoma Oil Company."

EAGLE

[*Musingly*]: Oklahoma? Say, I knew a barber down in Tulsa that used to shave me when I was travelling through there just a few years ago. And now he's worth millions.

PA

[*Incredulously*]: Millions?

EAGLE

Yes, millions. And he made it all out of oil.

PA

Are you in the oil business?

EAGLE

[*Off hand*]: Yes, a little.

RANKIN

[*To* PA]: He's trying to be modest. The fact is, he's one of the best posted oil men in America. He's got big holdings in Tennessee in that new oil field down there.

EAGLE

He's spoofing you, Mr. Potter.

RANKIN

[*Laughing heartily*]: Spoofing! Say, he could put us both wise to making some money if he'd only do it. I've been trying to tease some information out of him for a week. The trouble is that all these guys that really know something keep still about it, but the fellows that don't know anything are always giving you tips.

EAGLE

My dear Rankin—the oil business is like any other business. You have to study it. They tell

you it's luck. That's nonsense. It's knowledge and persistence and having the courage to back up your judgment, even if it means taking a chance.

PA

Well, there sure must be somep'n in it if barbers can make millions almost overnight.
[RANKIN *and* EAGLE *look at* PA *as a possibility.*]

EAGLE

Gentlemen! Talk about opportunity! The money is almost ready to pick up off the ground and put in the bank.

RANKIN

Mr. Eagle is going out of town to-night but he has accepted my invitation to lunch at Max's. I want to hear some more about this oil field, if I can pry it out of him.

PA

[*Hazily*]: Gosh, I wish I—could. [*Pause, during which* RANKIN *realizes that the fish is hooked.*]

RANKIN

Say, couldn't I bring Mr. Potter along?

EAGLE

Sure, glad to have him.

PA

I'd like to hear some more about this oil field.

RANKIN

Well, Potter, maybe between us we can wiggle some information outta this fellow.

EAGLE

[*Laughing heartily*]: I promise you, you won't get any more than I'm willing to let you have. Of course, I can see I'm up against a pretty shrewd business man in Mr. Potter.

PA

[*Puffing up under flattery*]: Well, I wasn't born yesterday.

EAGLE

[*Laughing*]: I'm a pretty good judge of human nature, Mr. Potter, and I know an up and coming go getter when I see him. That's what it takes to make a success in this world. Smoke? [*Hands* PA *and* RANKIN *expensive looking cigars.*] Pretty strong. Fifty center.

PA

[*Impressed*]: Hmm! Thank you. Thank you.

EAGLE

Rankin? [RANKIN *takes one.* EAGLE *lights up.*]

RANKIN

Well, you ought to know what it takes to make a success in this world. [*Looking out*]: Next stop's ours. You getting off here, Mr. Eagle?

EAGLE

Yeh. Might as well.

RANKIN

Potter and I will talk it over and meet you at lunch. Make it 12:30 at Max's.

PA

That's a good place.

[*As* EAGLE *and* RANKIN *exit,* PA *hesitates and lights up cigar.*]

MOTORMAN

[*Roaring at* PA]: Ya can't smoke here.

PA

[*Scared*]: 'Scuse me, beg your pardon.

MOTORMAN

[*Roaring at him*]: Bwaah!

[PA *tries to get out but two men enter from front platform, and two women are thrown against him from other side and he is blocked tightly as he shouts "Let me out!—here—let me out!"* MOTORMAN'S *bell is ringing and ringing as lights go out.*]

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE III.

[*SCENE:* Madam Kyra's *Parlor.*

A small, rather illy furnished room in an apartment. Great effort has been made to create an occult atmosphere. Medium *is a middle aged, dark woman, with shrewd eyes.*]

Medium

[*To someone off stage*]: Don't forget, girlie, if you have any friends who wish to consult the other world tell 'em to call Wabash 4725. Say Mrs. Johnson referred them. You know the police is so peculiar about these spiritual matters. Goo' bi', girlie.

Voice

Good-bye.

[Medium *slips on an apron and begins to wipe furniture with dust cloth which she takes from under shelf.*]

Voice

[*Off stage*]: Ma!

Medium

What is it?

VOICE

Did you order the groceries for dinner, Ma?

MEDIUM

Can't you see I've been busy? I've had a couple of customers in here already this morning and there'll be another in here any minute now. Go ahead and order some chops.

VOICE

We had chops for dinner yesterday.

MEDIUM

Suit yourself, but don't put on a boiled dinner.

VOICE

What's the matter with boiled dinners?

MEDIUM

They smell up the house. You can't keep people's minds on spirits when they come here and find the house full of corn beef and cabbage.

VOICE

We gotta eat, don't we? We ain't spirits.
[*Door bell rings.*]

MEDIUM

There's that girl now. Potter, I think her name is. Hold her a little while till I get these things offa me.

[MEDIUM *puts cloth away under shelf, takes off apron, and strikes professional pose.*]

MAMIE

[*Entering and apparently impressed by spooky atmosphere*]: Is this Madam Kyra?

MEDIUM

[*In her best professional tone*]: Yes, my dear, have you come to consult me?

MAMIE

Yes, please.

MEDIUM

The spirits are not always with us. [*Mysteriously*]: They come and go on missions of their own. They come and go. We must be patient.

MAMIE

[*Evidently impressed*]: Oh, I do hope they come to-day. I heard you could read hands and talk with the spirits, and everything——. Can you, really?

MEDIUM

I have great powers. My control, who is a beautiful East Indian, inspires me to say things that surprise *me* even. There—[*Indicating chair*]: sit down there, my dear. [*Takes seat opposite her at small table.*] Let me see your hand. [MAMIE *proffers right hand.*] No, your left hand first. Your left hand indicates the destiny which you are born for and the right hand indicates what you make of your opportunity . . . . [*Takes* MAMIE's *left hand in hers and studies it intently—bends thumb back.*] Oh, your thumb, it bends back almost too easily—that shows an extravagant nature. [MAMIE *looks disappointed and* MEDIUM *adds hastily*]: But taken together with other things I see in your hand it shows extreme cleverness with your fingers—that you can do things—[MAMIE *is pleased again.*] Your fingers are smooth. That's good—shows that you are artistic and that you love beautiful things, and that you will have them at any cost. [*Turns palm down.*]

MAMIE

Oh, I do love beautiful things.

MEDIUM

Your finger of Mercury is straight.

MAMIE

What's that?

MEDIUM

Your little finger—see—that is very rare. Beware of people with crooked little fingers. You can never trust them, dearie.

MAMIE

Oh, honestly?

MEDIUM

Yes, but your finger is almost too straight. You're too honest. Ah, dearie, you must not trust people too much. It is a wicked world. You will have a great deal of trouble if you trust people, especially your friends, and above all, your girl friends.

MAMIE

Oh, I know. I once knew a girl named—

MEDIUM

[*Interrupting*]: Yes, yes, you have a very dear girl friend that you trust very much?

MAMIE

Why, yes, of course.

MEDIUM

Known her very long?

MAMIE

Why, I've known Gladys Rankin all my life. Why, we live right next door to each other and we never have any secrets from each other.

MEDIUM

[*Shuffling cards*]: Cut them twice. [*Pause.*] Ah, you're in love.

MAMIE

Yes, I'm engaged. Oh, he's a wonderful fellow —so big, and handsome. All the girls in the college are crazy about him. He graduates this year and he's captain of the football team. [*Breathlessly*]: And he dances divinely — they're all jealous of me. Just the other day I heard two of them talking on the street car, they didn't know I was near them, and one of them said, "I don't see what Red Miller sees in that 'Townie.' ". They call me a "townie" because I don't go to the school. The other one said, "Yes, I don't see why he had to go off the campus to find a girl." But he loves me just the same and we're engaged but Pa

MEDIUM: Someone is coming between you and the one you love.
Act I; Scene III.—*Page 67*

doesn't like him because he hasn't any money. I wish I was rich, we'd get married just as soon as he graduated. He wants to get married now, anyway—wants to elope 'n everything. That's the way he is, a regular go-getter, up and at 'em.

MEDIUM

[*Who, during* MAMIE'S *revelation, has been laying cards out in approved fortune teller style, gazes at cards intently and then leans back, holding her fingers over her eyes, tragically*]: We are surrounded by unknown forces . . . . forces that are . . . . that are . . . . that are unknown to us.

MAMIE

Oh, what is it? What is it? You sound so sad.

MEDIUM

I am sad—for you, little girl. Some one is coming between you and the one you love.

MAMIE

Who? Who?

MEDIUM

[*Holding up hand*]: Wait—it begins to come to me. I see letters over your head—letters of

fire—wait—I see a C—no it's a G. It is very difficult—somehow, I feel the spirits are not with me as strong to-day. Let me see—the letters seem to come and go. G-L-U— No—G-L-A-D—

MAMIE

Gladys!

MEDIUM

That's it. And the last name is R-I—no—R-A-N—

MAMIE

Gladys Rankin!

MEDIUM

That's the name.

MAMIE

Oh, to think that Gladys, my best friend—so that's how she happened to be there last night. And this morning—that's how they happened to come in together. And on the street car coming here— She's trying to steal him from me. Oh! that deceitful wretch!

MEDIUM

[*Going back into trance*]: I seem to see a very handsome man, he is tall and broad-shouldered. He isn't dark, and yet he isn't light—

MAMIE

Oh, that must be Red.

MEDIUM

[*Smiling slightly*]: He seems a little plainer now. His hair is yellow, no, it's red, he has red hair.

MAMIE

Oh, then it must be Red— What's he doing? Tell me quick.

MEDIUM

I'd rather not.

MAMIE

Please, please.

MEDIUM

[*Dramatically*]: He is talking to your friend—to Gladys.

MAMIE

What are they saying? Can you hear what they're saying?

MEDIUM

Wait, wait, I see something. It is not very distinct—it has an evil look—dark evil influences are all around us. [*Seems to go off in trance and*

speaks more mournfully and dramatically]: I see it now—it gleams and gleams and yet how cruel it gleams.

MAMIE

What is it? What is it?

MEDIUM

It is a ring—a broken wedding ring.

MAMIE

Oh, my God! And he was talking about a ring, too. Just a little while ago.

MEDIUM

But your Indian guide is with you—I can see him standing behind you now— You are very fortunate to have such a lovely Indian guide.

MAMIE

I don't want any Indian guide. I want my Red. I'll have him, too. No Gladys Rankin will take him from me. The next time he says elope, I'll elope, believe me. But maybe he'll never ask me again. Oh, I'd die if I lost Red—[*Cries.*] Will I—will I—win him back?

MEDIUM

Ah! We are surrounded by unknown forces—Forces that are—that are unknown to us— Now, I see a man with a mustache. He is slightly bald and has a weary look in his eyes.

MAMIE

Oh, that's Pa.

MEDIUM

Now he is smiling. He is very rich.

MAMIE

That ain't Pa.

MEDIUM

He is going to make a lot of money in the future.

MAMIE

That's Pa.

MEDIUM

He is going to put over a business deal that will make him a lot of money. You will be very wealthy.

MAMIE

Honestly? Then Red and I could get married right away. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Do you really see a lot of money?

MEDIUM

[*Wearily*]: The spirits are with us everywhere. They watch us from the other planes. [*Stirring as if from trance.*] And now I am very tired. My spirits are leaving me. See, your guide has faded away.

MAMIE

[*Getting out money*]: Is Gladys really trying to get Red away from me? Does Red really love me? Is he true? Is Pa really gonna make a lot of money? Oh, tell me, tell me. [*Has opened her bag.*]

MEDIUM

[*Arousing from trance*]: The spirits have returned to their astral homes. [*Takes dollar bill from* MAMIE'S *open purse.*] We are alone once more in the everyday world. Ah, the other world is very beautiful, so different from this world, so different. [*Slyly extracts another dollar.*]

[*Door opens, typical* ICE MAN *appears, carrying tongs and chunk of ice.*]

ICE MAN

Say, come and take the grub outta ya ice box so I can put the ice in it, will ya?

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE IV

[*SCENE: Max's Business Lunch.*

Curtain rises disclosing Rankin *and* Eagle *seated in their places at table. Business of talking low and confidential.* Waiter *standing over them looking extremely bored. A customer sits alone at table to right.*

Pa *enters carrying hat, which* Check Girl *at foot of stairs tries unsuccessfully to take away from him.*]

Pa

Hello fellows? What's the good word?

Rankin

Hello Potter . . . . Sit right down and put your feet in the trough. [Pa *puts hat on vacant chair and seats himself.* Waiter *hands him menu and looks hopeful.*] Well, whatcha gonna have?

Eagle

[*Slowly*]: Let . . . . me . . . . see . . . .

PA

[*Slower*]: Let . . . . me . . . . seeeeee.
[WAITER *sneaks* PA'S *hat away and gives it to* GIRL, *who goes out with it, triumphantly.*]

RANKIN

Eagle was just telling me a good one, Potter . . . .

POTTER

[*Hurriedly, eagerly*]: Yeh? . . . . Say, I heard a good one the other day . . . . but maybe you've heard it.

EAGLE

Go on, let's hear it.

PA

Well, you stop me if you've heard it. I just heard it the other day and it was new to me, but maybe you've heard it before.

EAGLE

Let's hear it. I'll tell you if I have heard it before.

PA

Well, stop me if you've heard it. There were two buyers standing in the lobby of the Hotel Astor— Have you heard that story?

RANKIN

No, I haven't heard it.

[WAITER *tries to get order. They ignore him.*]

PA

Well, there was two buyers standing in the lobby of the Hotel Astor and the bell boy went through hollering, "Call for Mr. Cohen, call for Mr. Cohen—" Have you heard it? I bet you have, but I just heard it the other day and I thought it was good— Have you heard it?

EAGLE

No, I haven't heard it, go on with the story. Never mind, Waiter.

PA

Well, the boy goes through the lobby calling "Call for Mr. Cohen, call for Mr. Cohen," and Abie says to Ikey, "he's calling you" and Ikey says—haven't you *really* heard this story?

EAGLE

Honest, I haven't.

PA

That's funny. Well, if you have, stop me— Anyway, Abie says, "Ikey, that's you," and Ikey

says . . . . let me see . . . . that wasn't the way it went . . . . let me see . . . . Oh, now I have it . . . . the bell boy seen Abie and Ikey talking and he says . . . . no, that isn't it . . . . Aw, you've heard it anyway, haven't you?

RANKIN

No, doggone it, I haven't. Go on and tell the story.

PA

Well, the bell boy says, "Is your name Cohen" and Ikey says . . . . Ikey says . . . . let me see . . . . now what the devil did he say . . . .?

WAITER

The soft shell crabs are very nice.

RANKIN

[*To* EAGLE, *disgusted*]: Whatta you gonna have?

EAGLE

How about a nice light lunch of corned beef and cabbage?

PA

When in doubt try ham and eggs.

EAGLE

[*Looking at the menu*]: Let me see, let me see. Say d'y'ever hear that one about the travelling salesman who went to Battle Creek? [*Looks around carefully and lowers voice until it is inaudible to audience.* EAGLE *is evidently telling a very good story. Suddenly at what is obviously the end,* PA, RANKIN *and* EAGLE *burst out into wild laughter.*]

PA

Gee, thass a peach. Gee, he musta been surprised. Gee, thass good. [*Nervously*]: Say, whatta we gonna have?

RANKIN

[*To* WAITER *who is going away*]: Come back here, we want some service. Whatcha gonna have, fellows?

PA

You go ahead and order for me.

RANKIN

Well, I'm gonna have some of this plank whitefish and, let me see—some salad. What kind of dressing have you got, Waiter?

WAITER

We have Thousand-Island and Mayonnaise, and—

RANKIN

Give me some French Dressing. Tell them not to put too much vinegar in it.

EAGLE

That fish sounds all right to me. How about you, Potter?

PA

That's all right. They say fish is good brain food.

EAGLE

Well, I never saw a fisherman that looked like a testimonial.

RANKIN

[*To* WAITER]: Three of the planked whitefish, hash brown potatoes, salad. You know— Fix it up right and rush it. Coffee later, eh, fellows?

EAGLE AND PA

Yeh.

RANKIN

Well, Mr. Eagle, Potter and I would really like to get some inside dope if you'd only be kind enough to come through.

EAGLE

How do you mean, inside dope?

PA

[*Naively*]: Say, you must know somep'n about this oil business to make all the money you have. You don't want all the money in the world, do you? Why not show us how to get some of it.

RANKIN

Sure, come on, be a sport.

EAGLE

Well, say, I believe you fellows are really daring me to tell you how to make a little money.

PA

[*Excitedly*]: Yes, that's it. We're daring you.

EAGLE

All right, then, I'll just take that dare. Lemme show you something. [*Reaches into pocket and*

takes out map, spreads it out on table. Pa *and* Rankin *crowd over him,* Eagle *indicating with pencil as he talks.*] Look. Here is a government survey map. A United States map, mind you. No monkey business about Uncle Sam. Where he says there's oil, there's oil. You can't trifle with the government.

Pa

Thass right, you can't.

Eagle

See that line there. That's what's called the anticline. That's a geological term.

Pa

[*Nodding wisely*]: Yes, yes.

Eagle

[*With a look of understanding towards* Rankin]: Wherever you see that line, underneath it is oil. Now follow that line. See it goes over here and then down there. There, that's the place. Full of oil. The biggest undeveloped field in the country. Why, do you know, since word of this has gone around that the Shell Company—[*Turns to* Pa]: You know, that great big Dutch Oil Company?—

PA

Oh, yes.

EAGLE

Well, the Shell Company and the Standard Oil—the two greatest Oil Companies in the world, are bidding against each other for leases, and that's where the joke comes in—ha! ha! [*Leans back.*]

[WAITER *enters, removes plates and opens napkins for them.*]

PA

What do you mean?

EAGLE

Yeh, they're bidding for the leases and all the time who do you suppose has them?

PA

Who?

EAGLE

Me, myself.

PA

[*In awe*]: You—you've got all these leases?

EAGLE

Yes, sir. Little John W. Me. All of them.

PA

Well, whaddye think o' that?

RANKIN

[*To* PA]: That's the way this bird's made all his money—getting there first.

EAGLE

Have you any idea what a real oil field looks like? [*Pulls out a large circular from his pocket and spreads it on the table.*] Look at this. Look at those wells. Look at that gusher. Did you ever see anything like that in your life? [PA *gets interested.* EAGLE *pulls out another circular, long accordion pleated one, which he spreads all over table.*] Look at this—look at that—look at those. [PA *and* RANKIN *grow more excited as* EAGLE *continues to pull circulars, broadsides, maps, prospectuses, and all kinds of highly colored advertising material out of his various pockets, like a conjurer pulling white rabbits out of a silk hat.*]

EAGLE

Lemme tell you about this. Owned by a fellow named Little, Dick Little. Two years ago he came to me just as you did to-day and asked me to put

Pa Potter: Come on, be a sport; I got some money to invest

Act I; Scene IV.—*Page 86*

him next to something good, and I said, "Listen, there's a new field opening up in Oklahoma. Buy leases. Get options. They're drilling there now. There's oil there. I *know* it."

PA

How did you know?

EAGLE

Hell, I can smell it. Well, this Little says, "Where'll I get the money," and I says, "Beg, borrow or steal, but get it," so this fellow says, "All right, I'll get it," and what do you suppose he did?

PA

What did he do?

EAGLE

He put a plaster on his house. He got five thousand dollars and he bought leases with it. Oh, he was a plunger, that fellow was, game to the core.

PA

Did they strike oil?

EAGLE

Listen. Do you know how much that fellow's worth to-day?

PA

No; how much?

EAGLE

He can write his check for five hundred thousand dollars and there ain't a bank in America that won't cash it.

PA

Five hundred thousand dollars!

EAGLE

You make it fast in this game. But what I started to tell you was this same Little owns the leases right here. [*Indicating spot on map.*]

PA

Where?

EAGLE

[*Dramatically*]: Here. [RANKIN *and* PA *crowd over to look at it.*]

PA

Whaddye think o' that? My God!

RANKIN

Look at that!

PA

My God! [EAGLE *and* RANKIN *exchange glances of understanding.*]
[WAITER *enters with food which he serves.*]

EAGLE

The Company I own has the leases on all this vast area of oil land. The very same leases that the two big oil trusts are fighting for!

RANKIN

Couldn't we get some of those leases?

PA

Yes, couldn't we?

EAGLE

Ridiculous. Why, they're all closely held—they're taken up by keen investors long ago. Like this fellow Little.

PA

Gee, that would be a good investment.

EAGLE

Good investment! [*Looks at* RANKIN *who smiles.*] Well, I should say it would.

PA

Surely there must be some of those leases left.

EAGLE

I doubt it. Why man, you can see for yourself what it means. With gasoline at twenty-five cents a gallon and only one of these wells gushing a thousand barrels a day, fifty gallons in a barrel, fifty thousand gallons at twenty-five cents a gallon is twelve thousand five hundred dollars a day from just one well. Suppose you had a hundred wells. Can't you see what that means? Town houses, country houses, Rolls-Royces, chauffeurs, butlers, Nice, Monte Carlo, the Riviera—

PA

[*Pleadingly*]: Come on, let me have some of thoses leases. Be a sport. I've got some money to invest.

RANKIN

Sure, let me have some too, Eagle. Don't be a pig.

EAGLE

Well, there's a few, but I was holding them for some friends of mine that are in the business.

RANKIN

You can disappoint them, they've probably got plenty of leases. Don't be a pig.

PA

How many leases could I get for—say a thousand dollars?

EAGLE

[*Glances at* RANKIN, *who shakes his head—speaks to* PA *in a conciliatory tone*]: Well, I'm afraid a thousand dollars — well — [*Shrugs his shoulders.*]

PA

[*Desperately*]: Well, I could dig up some more if I really had to.

RANKIN

I've got some money to invest, too. Believe me, it looks good to me.

EAGLE

[*Scornfully*]: Looks good to you, does it? Well! You'd be lucky to get any. [*Looking at map closely.*] Fact is, there are only three blocks left that are on the market at any price. It might

be possible to swing the three of them for four thousand apiece, but they've got to be bought as a unit. [*Suddenly, as if inspired*]: I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take one of them if each of you will take one of them. How's that?

PA

Why—er—four thousand—er—gosh, that's a lot of money.

EAGLE

Oh, yes—for some people—but for men like us —what's four thousand dollars when an opportunity like this comes along?

PA

[*Gulping*]: Yes, thass right.

RANKIN

Well, I believe I could dig my share up.

EAGLE

Good; that's two units taken care of. How about you, Potter?

PA

Well, —I—I—

EAGLE

[*With affected carelessness*]: Suit yourself. I'd a darn sight rather hang on to it. I know plenty of fellows that would break their necks to get in on this. Maybe Mrs. Potter objects to you making any invesments without her advice?

PA

[*Swelling up proudly*]: Say, I wear the pants in my house! But four thousand dollars. Thass a lot of money right off the bat like this.

EAGLE

Well, five hundred thousand dollars is a lot of money, too. Ask Mr. Little. [*Puts leases back in his pocket.*] I see you were just kidding about wanting an opportunity to make some money. Too bad.

RANKIN

You're not going to crawl now, are you Potter?

PA

Crawl? Who? Me? I should say not. [*With attempted bravado.*] Count me in for one of those units, Eagle.

EAGLE

No, you don't want any of this.

PA

[*Eagerly*]: I do too. I'm a gambler. But I'm not taking any chance, am I?

EAGLE

Listen, you're just as safe as if you were in God's pocket. [*Takes leases out of his pocket again.*] Lemme see, here are the blanket leases for each of the three units. Want first choice, Potter?

PA

I guess one's just as good as the other.

EAGLE

[*Softly, meaningly*]: Yes, one's just as good as the other.

PA

Well, I'll take this one.

EAGLE

[*To* RANKIN]: Here, you take your choice of the two.

RANKIN

Well, this is mine.

EAGLE

Well then, this is mine. What's this? [*Picks up document — reads*]: "Three hundred and twenty acres — Frank Winter, Johnson County." [*To* PA.] That doesn't seem to belong to any of these units. [*Suddenly, with show of generosity*]: Here, I'll throw this in to you, just for luck.

PA

[*Eagerly*]: Thanks. [*Puts it in pocket.*] Show me my property on the map. Where am I now?

EAGLE

See this place. You're right in here. Right in the heart of the gusher region. [*Happily*]: Picture it for yourself. Derricks everywhere. Oil shooting out of the ground. Long trains of tank cars rolling all day and all night. The roar of machinery. Bustling towns springing up over night. The shouting of thousands of happy workmen. All working busily making money for you.

RANKIN

Think of it!

PA

[*Excitedly*]: My God!

WAITER

[*Coming with coffee at psychological moment*]: Here you are, sir.

EAGLE

Take it away. [*Waves* WAITER *back and begins unfolding documents for* PA.] Here you are. [*Hands fountain pen to* PA, *shaking it on table cloth.* WAITER *gives him a dirty look.*] Maybe you can write with this but I never saw a fountain pen that would work. Here, sign here, [*pause*] and here. [*Pause.*] Now down here, [*pause*] and here. [PA *signs paper with eager trembling hands as* WAITER *serves coffee.*] Now here. Now wait a minute. On the back. Now here's a blank check. You can fill it out for your own bank.

PA

You wouldn't mind, would you, er—er—you'll have to—er—er— Could you let me date it ahead for a day or so?

EAGLE

[*Looking at* RANKIN]: Why—why—

RANKIN

Oh, that's all right. Sure you will, won't you?

PA

[*Eagerly*]: I'll make a deposit this afternoon and date it for to-morrow. You'll hold it a day, won't you?

EAGLE

Yes, certainly, yes, sure. [EAGLE *takes check from* PA *and blows on it, waves it in the air. Shoves leases over to* PA.] There you are, sir. Mr. Potter, I congratulate you. You're a rich man. [*To* RANKIN]: All right, next.

RANKIN

[*Signs up and writes check*]: Here you are.

WAITER

Will that be all, sir? [*Figures on check.*]

EAGLE

[*Gayly*]: Yes, that will be all. Slip me the bad news. [WAITER *marks total on check and turns it face down on table.*]

RANKIN

[*Reaching for check*]: Here, let me pay for it, this is my treat.

PA

No, it's my treat.

EAGLE

Gentlemen, gentlemen, let me pay for something.

RANKIN

You paid for the last lunch.

PA

[*Half heartedly*]: I want to pay for it.

EAGLE

[*Magnificently*]: No. You can pay for the next one out of the earnings of your oil well.

PA

Well, I'll take care of the waiter. [*Puts dollar bill on table with flourish.* WAITER *eyes it greedily, takes* EAGLE'S *money and goes away to pay check.*]

EAGLE

They're drilling some wells down there now, you know. The minute I get some news I'll give you a ring. What's your home number?

PA

No, no, no, no. Don't call me at the house about this. If Ma ever finds out about—er—er—I mean —er—er— [*Stops confused.*]

EAGLE

[*Soothingly*]: That's all right. I'm not going to tell your wife anything about your business affairs.

[WAITER *returns with silver on his book. They rise to go.* RANKIN *and* EAGLE *get hats from* GIRL *and go out.*]

PA

[*Lagging behind, muttering to self*]: Ma mustn't know a thing about this.

[*Picks up dollar bill and throws dime down on plate. Pockets bill and follows* EAGLE *and* RANKIN *out.* WAITER *gives him murderous look as he grabs hat from* GIRL *without tipping her and exits.* GIRL *and* WAITER *exchange vindictive looks as* PA *ascends stairs.*]

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE V

[*SCENE: The* Potter *living room. Curtain rise discloses* Bill Potter *at table tuning a radio set with all the accompanying wierd noises that go with this operation.* Ma *is fitting a new party dress on* Mamie *and putting on the last finishing touches.*]

Radio

[*With peculiar mounting screech, as* Bill *fools with dials*]: Gurrr! Blah! Whee . . . . This is Station Woof! . . . . Stand by one moment please for a bedtime story from Uncle Woozy . . . . [Bill *moves dial and radio wheezes Bzzzz —Bzzzz.*]

Voice

[*In affected fatherly tones*]: Once upon a time dear children there was a little cuckoo who lived in a clock. His name was Harold . . . . Harold Cuckoo—and every hour he would sing out—[*Imitating*]: "Cuckoo . . . . Cuckoo" . . . .

MAMIE

[*Evidently overwrought*]: Kill it! Kill it!
[RADIO *starts again.*]

BILL

What do you know about machinery?

MAMIE

What do you know about radio?

MA

Wait 'til I get a needle. [*Hurries out.*]

BILL

[*Excited*]: Say! Can't you get Ma and Pa out of here so I can get dressed and sneak?

MAMIE

Sh-h-h, here comes Ma.

BILL

[*Wailing*]: Gee whiz! Lookit the time.

MAMIE

I can't help the time.

MA

[*Enters. Kneels down and fusses with* MAMIE'S *dress*]: Stand still a minute. What are you fidgeting about?

RADIO

Gurrr! Blah!

PA

[*Entering nervously with paper*]: Stop that racket.

MA

Why, Pa! William's trying to fix it so we can hear the concert.

PA

I don't wanna hear any concert.

MAMIE

Why don't you and Ma go to a movie? You've got a good chance now with the baby at Grandma's.

BILL

[*Hurriedly*]: Yes, why don't you? There's a swell movie at the corner.

MA

What's the name of it? [BILL *turns knob of Radio so noise drowns answer.*]

PA

[*Making himself comfortable*]: Where's the financial page of this paper anyway?

MA

What do you want with the financial page?

BILL

Look at the movie ads and see what's at the corner.

PA

I thought you knew.

MA

[*Looking at* PA]: Your hair seems to be getting thinner on top. I think it needs some oil.

PA

[*Jumping up alarmed*]: Oil?

MA

[*Amazed*]: Why yes, didn't you ever hear tell of oil for the hair?

PA

[*Trying to cover up embarrassment*]: Oh yes, yes.

RADIO

This is station M L O signing off for the night. It is now eight-fifteen.

MAMIE

[*Excitedly*]: Then our clock's wrong. What's keeping Red anyway?
[BILL *rises and tries to sneak out.*]

PA

Oh, everything's always wrong in this house. Bill where you goin'?

BILL

I thought I'd go out for a—walk—

PA

You don't go out of this house to-night.

BILL

[*Goes back to Radio, wailing*]: Aw, gee whiz! Why don't you go to a movie?

MAMIE

What's keeping Red anyway?

RADIO

[*In slow, cold tone*]: This is Station WWJ, Detroit News, Detroit, Michigan. John H. Wollock, the local wealthy manufacturer, committed suicide to-day in his palatial home on Woodward

Avenue. It is rumored he had lost everything he owned in a disastrous speculation. Bzzz! Bzzz!

PA

[*With genuine anguish*]: Oh, my God!

MA

What's the matter? Do you know him?

PA

No.

MA

Say, what's the matter with you to-night, anyway?

[*Telephone rings,* MAMIE *jumps up and rushes for it off stage. So does* BILL. *So does* PA. MAMIE *gets there first.*]

MAMIE

Hello, hello. No, you've got the wrong number. [*Re-entering*]: Darn it, I thought it was Red.

BILL

I thought it was—er—er—

PA

I thought it was—er—er—

MA

Have you all gone crazy to-night?
[*Doorbell rings.* PA *rushes to door after* MA.]

BILL

[*To* MAMIE]: Who is it?

MA

[*At door*]: Why, it's Mr. and Mrs. Rankin. Good evening. Won't you come in?

BILL

[*To* MAMIE]: Here's my chance. Keep 'em talkin' here, will you, while I get dressed and sneak out. Oh you Anabelle! [*Out at last.*]

MAMIE

[*Stamping foot*]: Where is Red?
[RANKINS *enter talking to* POTTERS.]

MA

[*To* MRS. RANKIN]: Won't you slip off your cape, it's warm in here.

MRS. RANKIN

I think I will. We can only stay a minute, you know. We're on our way to the movies. We just

dropped in to— [*To* MAMIE]: Oh, what a lovely gown. Going to the dance over to the Community Center to-night?

MAMIE

Yes.

BILL

[*Voice off stage*]: Mamie, come here a minute. [MAMIE *hurries out.*]

MA

Oh, how thin you are getting, Mrs. Rankin. Gladys was telling me you have some of those records.

MRS. RANKIN

Oh yes, and Allan makes so much fun of me.

RANKIN

[*Mimicking her*]: One— two— three— four— [*Keeps time with silly gymnastic movements.*]

MRS. RANKIN

Now Allan, behave yourself.

RANKIN

You're just jealous because I keep my girlish figure.

MA

You know I can't understand that fifth one at all. Would you mind coming up and explaining it to me? It'll only take you a minute.

MRS. RANKIN

No, of course not. That's the one that goes tra, la, la, la. [MA *backs out, with* MRS. RANKIN *facing her. Both tra-la-la as they go.*]

PA

[*Looking around carefully to see if coast is clear*]: Not a word to the wife about that investment. She-uh, women don't understand such matters, you know.

RANKIN

[*Soothingly*]: Sure, sure, I understand, that's all right.

PA

You know, women are funny about money matters. You know if she found out I invested that four thousand dollars in oil she—she—well, she

wouldn't understand it, that's all. She'd ask a lot of questions, and—

RANKIN

Oh, that's all right. You could answer any questions.

PA

[*Solemnly*]: Mrs. Potter asks questions that nobody can answer. Sh-h-h— [*Music of exercises starts upstairs. They look up at each other and laugh.* PA *goes on, a bit pathetically*]: You know we were saving up that four thousand to pay the mortgage that is coming due and I didn't . . . . I didn't . . . . Well, I didn't tell Eagle, but that four thousand dollars is every cent I've got in the world and if anything went wrong . . . . [*Pleadingly*]: Say, there's no chance of anything goin' wrong, is there?

RANKIN

[*Expansively*]: No, no, no. Not a chance in the world. Don't you worry for a minute. I'm not worrying, believe me.

PA

If anything went wrong . . . . but it's gotta come out all right. I've gotta have some luck in

PA POTTER: Not a word to the wife about that investment.
Act I; Scene V.—*Page 105*

this world . . . . and sometimes I gotta hunch this is it.

RANKIN

Yeh, I wouldn't be surprised if this wasn't it.

MRS. RANKIN

[*Re-entering with* MA]: I guess we better be going now. We just dropped in a moment on our way to the movies to congratulate Mr. Potter.

MA

For what?

MRS. RANKIN

Congratulate him on his oil deal.

MA

Oil deal?

RANKIN

Come on, dear, we're going to be late.

MRS. RANKIN

[*Refusing to be headed off*]: Sure, that Tennessee oil land. Allan bought some too, didn't you, dear?

RANKIN

Well, —er—er—sure. He and I are going to be millionaires, aren't we Potter? [*Slaps him on back.*]

PA

[*Cowering before* MA's *fixed look*]: Sure, sure. [*Turns to* MA]: You see, you see, dear, it was somep'n like this—

MRS. RANKIN

[*Gushing*]: Oh, I am sure it is going to be all right. Allan has such a good business head, haven't you, dear?

RANKIN

[*Modestly*]: Well, yes. . .

PA

[*As ominous silence settles over the group*]: You see, Ma—well—you see it was somep'n like this—

MRS. RANKIN

[*Noticing the strained atmosphere*]: I think we had better be going, dear. [*To* PA *and* MA]: You must come over real soon now and see us, now

that we are in the oil business together. [*Laughs.*] And you must take a ride in my new car. Allan has just bought me the nicest car. You know it makes an old car look like a lot of junk. [*Laughs heartily.*]

MA

[*Bravely*]: Oh yes, we were talking about getting a new car too, wasn't we, Pa?

PA

[*Nervously*]: Yes, oh, yes.

MRS. RANKIN

Come dear, we've got to be going. The show starts at eight o'clock.

RANKIN

No, dear, eight-thirty.

MRS. RANKIN

Why no, dear, eight o'clock. I know because when we went there last time it started at eight o'clock.

RANKIN

Eight-thirty, my dear. [*They are going out.*]

MRS. RANKIN

Eight-thirty nothin—it's eight, I tell you.

RANKIN

Eight your granny—eight-thirty, I know what I'm talking about.

MRS. RANKIN

Don't be so pig headed—it's eight o'clock.

[*Door slams and out they go. Now we'll never know just when the show starts.*]

MA

[*Turning on* PA]: Well, what's the meaning of this? Where did you get the money to buy oil stock?

PA

Well—I—well—you see it was somep'n like this—

MAMIE

You don't mean to tell me you touched that money that we were going to use to pay off the mortgage?

PA

[*Bravely*]: Well—

MA

All of it?

PA

[*Taking the plunge*]: Why not? How is a fellow going to get anywhere if he don't take a chance once in a while. And besides this ain't no chance, it's a sure thing. [*Takes map out of his pocket.*] Look, here's the map.

MA

Map your grandmother! That doesn't mean anything.

PA

It doesn't, eh? That's a government map. Backed by the United States Government. You know what that means, don't you?

MA

Well, what of it? How about the leases you bought. Are they backed by the Government, too?

PA

All my life I've been workin' like a dog, tryin' to get somewhere by workin' and savin'. Who ever got anywhere by workin' and savin'? You've

got to take a chance once in a while. Look at Rockefeller; look at Morgan; look at Schwab. They all took a chance and see where they are.

MA

Yes, and look at the poor house, that's where we'll finish up.

PA

No we'll not.

MA

We will too. We're headed there right now. [*Her anger rises.*] What did I ever do to have such a boob of a husband.

PA

Boob!

MA

Worse than a boob.

PA

[*Defensively*]: Well, Rankin bought some, didn't he?

MA

Rankin? Who told you he bought some?

PA

I seen him.

MA

Huh! You did? You're a bigger boob than I thought you were. Don't tell me that a smart man like Rankin would let himself get roped in the way you do. What did you do it for?

PA

[*Flaring up*]: What did I do it for? Because you nagged me into it. Day after day, morning and night, that's all I've heard, money, money, money. "I want a maid like the Rankins—I want a new car like the Rankins—I want new furniture like the Rankins — I want this — I want that." How was I going to get the money for all those things? Pull it out of the air? Save it out of my salary? What did I do it for? You should ask me such a question.

MA

But to take the money that we've been saving for ten years to pay for our home, take every dollar we have in the world and throw it away on oil leases. Of all things—oil leases! Why, that's the way the Davis' lost all their money and now look at her—hasn't got a rag to her back, and barely enough to live on. And Thompsons — didn't George Thompson steal from his employers to

make up the money he lost in an oil deal—and had to go to jail? [*Bitterly, sarcastically*]: Oil leases! Why didn't you buy the Masonic Temple? Or Yellowstone Park?

[Mamie *enters.*]

Pa

All right, all right. I did it for you.

Ma

You did it for me? Aren't you good to me? Here I've been working and slaving, wearing my fingers to the bone for years to help you buy a little home, and you take just what we needed to pay off the mortgage without consulting me or saying one word to me.

Mamie

[*Breaking into conversation, eagerly*]: But Ma, the medium told me this morning that Pa was going to make an investment and it was going to turn out wonderfully.

Pa

[*Excitedly*]: Did she—did she? [*Hoarsely*]: What did she say?

MA

[*Bitterly*]: What's the difference what she said. It's all superstition—you said so yourself this morning.

MAMIE

She said Pa was going to make a lot of money in a new investment. It was going to turn out wonderful.

MA

[*Grimly*]: It would be mighty strange if anything Pa ever did turned out wonderful. We're going to lose our home and everything. That's what's goin' to happen to us. I can see it. I don't have to be any medium to see that. After I've worked my fingers to the bone and saved for years and years he goes and throws the money away in oil land in Kalamazoo.

PA

Tennessee, Ma, Tennessee.

MA

What's the difference?

MAMIE

But Ma, the medium said Pa was gonna make a lot of money out of it and we were gonna have a town house and a country house—

MA

[*Interrupting*]: Poor house!

MAMIE

[*Rises*]: No, we're gonna travel and ride around in Rolls-Royces.

PA

And we will, too . . . . I'm not gonna be strugglin' all my life. I'm gonna get somewhere and be somebody.

MA

You've got us somewhere all right. You've got us in a hole that's deeper than any oil well they'll ever dig on those leases of yours in Oklahoma.

PA

Tennessee, Ma, Tennessee.

MA

Tennessee, is it? All right then, I'll tell you what you're going to do.

PA

What?

MA

You're goin' right down there.

PA

Who? Me?

MA

Yes, you. To-night. Now.

PA

But—but—

MA

No buts about it. You're goin' down there and find out what you put your money in. I'm going to know. C'mon, I'll pack your bag right now.

PA

But listen, Ma, listen.

MAMIE

Oh, it's gonna turn out just fine, I know. Just wonderful, that medium said so—and Ma, she just knows everything. She knew that Pa was going to make an investment and—she knew all about Red; she even described him. She even knew Gladys' name and everything and say—[*Stops as*

if struck by an idea.] What she said about Pa was true—then it must be true what she said about Gladys and Red—that's why he isn't here yet. [*Doorbell rings.*]

MA

[*To* PA]: Who's that, now?

[MA *goes to door and voices of* RED *and* GLADYS *are heard offstage.*]

MA

[A*t door*]: Hello, Gladys. Hello, Red. Your folks just left, Gladys. Went to the movies.

GLADYS

[*Who is clinging to* RED's *arm*]: Oh, Valentino is there to-night. I think you might take me to see Rodolf some night, Red. He's so masterful. I love masterful men. [*To* MAMIE]: Why, hello Mamie, didn't see you.

MAMIE

I'm not surprised.

MA

Pa! C'mon, now.

[PA *goes out to his fate. Poor* PA.]

RED

Hello, Mamie. How's every little thing? Been waiting?

MAMIE

[*Coldly*]: 'Course I've been waiting.

RED

How'd you like the medium this morning? Did she tell you anything that you didn't know?

MAMIE

[*Meaningly*]: She told me plenty.

GLADYS

And what she says is true, too, isn't it?

MAMIE

Yes, what she says is true, too.

RED

Are you glad you went?

MAMIE

You bet. Now I know who my friends are. [*Gives* GLADYS *a dirty look.*]

GLADYS

Why, Mamie, what do you mean?

MAMIE

You know what I mean all right.

RED

[*Interrupting*]: Why Mamie, what's the matter with you?

MAMIE

What's the matter with me? What's the matter with *you?* You promised to be here an hour ago.

RED

I'm awfully sorry I kept you waiting.

MAMIE

You look sorry. You looked awfully sorry when you came in—I noticed it.

RED

Why, I was detained.

MAMIE

Yes, I see you were.

GLADYS

I seem to be intruding.

MAMIE

Oh, not at all. What makes you think that? I'm sure Red doesn't think so.

GLADYS

I'd better go.

MAMIE

Oh no, you two seem to be gettin' along together so nicely, why don't you go on to the dance. I'll go to the movie. I like masterful men, too.

RED

Why, you're not sore because I — because Gladys—because we—

MAMIE

We—So, it's come to that, has it?

GLADYS

Well, I'm going if you feel that way about it.

MAMIE

That's too bad. You were just going, too, weren't you, Red?

RED

Say, what's the matter with you?

MAMIE

[*Flounces to door and turns around*]: I wish you all the luck you deserve, both of you.
[*Bang! That's the door closing behind poor* MAMIE.]

GLADYS

[*With quivering lips*]: To think she'd treat me like that—. And I put in all morning helping you to do something for her. [*Raises tear-stained face to him and lays head on his shoulder.*]

RED

[*Patting her awkwardly as she cuddles up to him with scarcely an effort*]: There, there, I wouldn't feel so hurt about it. Mamie's all right. She didn't mean anything.
[*As they walk towards the door* MAMIE *re-enters and watches them bitterly.*]

GLADYS

[*To* RED]: I think you're too good to her.

RED

I'm not gonna worry. She'll get over it. C'mon, we'll go over to the dance.
[GLADYS *and* RED *go out.*]

MAMIE

[*Sobbing*]: The spirits were right. It's all coming true.

[BILL *enters, backing in. He is in* PA'S *dress suit, obviously very scared, very uncomfortable.*]

BILL

Sh-h-h. Everything all right?

MAMIE

[*Crying*]: Ye-e-e-s.

BILL

Good. Tie this darn tie for me, like a good fellow, will you. [MAMIE *tries but cannot see through her tears.*]

[BILL *hears* MA *and* PA *coming and ducks behind curtain.*]

PA

Doggone the luck. I'll have to get up and dress at four o'clock in the morning. [*Gets pipe out of desk.*]

MA

Hurry up. Don't talk so much about it. You'll miss your train. And you come back here with some information, too.

PA

Good-bye, doggone it. [*Slams door. So would you.*]

[BILL *tries to tiptoe out back way and* MA *turns around and catches him. Isn't life perfectly punk?*]

MA

Where you going, young man? Is that your father's dress suit? Wait 'till I tell him. [*Goes to window as if to call him.*]

BILL

Aw, gee whiz, Ma! Be a sport. I gotta take Anabelle to that dance to-night, and Pa won't buy me a suit. I'll take good care of it. C'mon, Ma, let me go, be a sport.

MA

[*Weakening*]: Well, if you don't need a good walloping! But as long as you've got it on I guess you might just as well—

BILL

[*Kissing her impulsively*]: Ma!

MA

[*Touched*]: Well, well. Here wait a minute. Let me fix it. [*Straightens his tie.*] Now go ahead and have a good time. Don't stay out too late.

BILL

[*Kissing her*]: Ma, you're a wow! [*Exit.*]

MA

I'm a wow. What's a wow? [*Notices* MAMIE *is crying—hurries over to her.*] Why, Mamie, what are you crying about? Aren't you going to the dance? Where's Red?

MAMIE

He's gone. [*Throws her arms around* MA *and sobs*]: Oh, Ma!

MA

[*Soothingly*]: There, there, tell me all about it.

[CURTAIN]

End of Act One.

THE POTTERS

ACT II.

THE POTTERS

ACT II: SCENE I

Scene represents section of Pullman. Curtains are closed. Lights illuminating aisle dimly. MAN *in dressing gown enters from right and gets into lower berth.* PORTER'S *bell rings off left.* PORTER *enters left with man's shoes which he places under berth. He and occupant of lower berth hold muffled conversation. Bell rings again.* PORTER *exits left. Enters with ladder and* PA'S *black bag.*

PORTER

Numba four, heah yu' ah, sah.

PA

[*Dubiously*]: Ain't you got a lower?

PORTER

Ain't a loah in the house. [*Occupant of lower shakes curtain and says "Sh!"*]

I guess this fella down heah's asleep. You're up kinda late, yu' know.

PA

Yeh, I've been thinkin'. I gotta get up early in the morning, too. Gotta make that change for El Dorado.

PORTER

El Dorado? Yu' one o' them oil men?

PA

Why, yes. Do you know any of 'em?

PORTER

Yeh, they're ridin' up and down this road all the time, but they usually catches numba nine—it goes right through. Must be a lot o' money in that business.

PA

Oh, yes. Lots of it. I got all mine in it. [*Ascends ladder and sits in berth.*]

PORTER

Well, well, what do yo' think o' that?

PA

Call me in time to dress at Carbondale?

PORTER

Yes sah. That's an awful train from Cahbondale to El Dorado—ridin' all day long, all night, stoppin' at all the cow stations and mail boxes. You oughta caught numba nine in the mawnin'.

PA

I know, but I really didn't know I was goin' 'til the last minute. It was sorta sudden like.

PORTER

Yes sah, it happens that way sometimes, don't it?

PA

It sure does.

PORTER

Well, good night, sah, I'll call yo' at fo'.

PA

Four? My God!

[PA *sits on edge of berth, evidently sunk in deep thought. Takes off one shoe and finding no*

place in berth to put it, drops it carefully to aisle. Drops other shoe, absently. Loud thud.]

VOICE

[*From lower berth*]: Hey, where do you get that stuff?

[*Man looks out from curtain,* PA *ducks in behind curtains and pulls them shut.*]

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE II

[*SCENE: Two workmen are seated at what is evidently an oil well in process of being drilled. Huge cross beam attached to large fly-wheel moving up and down. The drill is working slowly as curtain rises.*]

BILL

How far down?

MIKE

About a thousand feet.

BILL

Looks like the first ten, too. Bet there ain't a quart of oil within a hundred miles o' here.

MIKE

Say, I'd like to see some oil before I die. I been drillin' dry holes ever since I can remember.

BILL

I knew a feller once that was workin' on a well and struck oil.

MIKE

Ah, he was kiddin' you.

BILL

No, honest, it was real oil and everything.

MIKE

Well, I don't much care, I get mine anyway whether its oil or not.

BILL

It's a damn good thing for us the world's full of boobs that's willin' to pay us for diggin' holes in the ground, but doggone my hide, I don't see what fun they get out of it.

MIKE

They must be funny cuckoos, spendin' their money this way.

BILL

I'd like to see one of them guys once that's puttin' up the money for this.

MIKE

Oh, that's just like wantin' to see Santy Claus. I wouldn't. I'd be ashamed to look 'em in the face. I'd bust out cryin'.

BILL

Honest, it don't seem right, us peckin' away at the ground here and gettin' their money for it—

PA

[*Entering, looking half dead for sleep*]: Hello there, fellows.

MIKE

Hello, stranger.

PA

Is this the oil field?

MIKE

[*Laughing*]: Ha! ha! that's good. [*To* BILL]: He calls this an oil field. Ain't that rich?

PA

What's the joke? Isn't this an oil well?

BILL

It would be if it had some oil in it.

PA

Well, what are you drillin' for?

MIKE

Well, speakin' for myself, I'm drillin' for a dollar and twenty-five cents an hour.

PA

[*Looking at a map*]: What is this place?

MIKE AND BILL

This is the Winter Farm.

PA

This is the place, all right. Say, do you know who I am? [*Turns to* MIKE, *who shakes his head; then turns to* BILL.]

BILL

Haven't the slightest idea.

PA

[*Proudly*]: I own all these leases around here.

MIKE

You do? [*Both rise.*]

BILL

Are you the fellow that's puttin' up the money for this drillin'.

PA

[*Proudly*]: You bet.

MIKE

Well, we wish you luck, don't we, Bill?

BILL

Yeh; nobody'd be gladder to see oil than me.

PA

You're gonna see it this time. Look, it says so on the map here. Did you ever see this map?

MIKE

No. [*Looks at map quizzically*]: My, what a nice map.

BILL

Yeh! But that don't mean nothin'.

PA

[*Doggedly*]: But it's a government map. See, backed by the United States Government.

MIKE

Well, maybe that'll help. I hope so, don't you Bill?

BILL

[*Rises*]: I hope so. Say, they just bailed her out a little while ago. Like to see what we got?

PA

Sure. Sure.

BILL

Stick around. We may have some oil for you.

MIKE

[*Coming up with something in hand*]: Here you are, sir.

[*The men smell it.* PA *smells it.* PA *bends over it in the dim light; so does* BILL.]

PA

[*Excitedly*]: What is it, what is it, fellas?

BILL

Limestone.

PA

Is that all you've got so far?

BILL

Oh, no.

PA

What?

BILL

Sandstone.

[PA *sits down with them and fills pipe nervously. During succeeding conversation* PA *lights innumerable matches but can't get pipe started.*]

PA

[*Entreatingly*]: Honest, whaddye think about this well? Tell me honest now.

BILL

It's a nice well.

PA

Is there any oil in it? Any chance of getting any oil?

MIKE

Well, somebody's gettin' it. You never can tell. We always say oil is like an appendix.

PA

Waddye mean?

MIKE

You never know you got it 'til it busts loose.

BILL

[*Softening a bit*]: Say, did you put much money in this thing, stranger?

PA

Every cent I got in the world, fellows.

MIKE

Well, I'll say you're a gambler.

BILL

Yeh, that's one name for it.

PA

[*Pleading*]: But there is oil around this country, aint there?

BILL

Well, mebbe.

MIKE

Say, I been drilling oil wells for twenty-five years, stranger, and I ain't never seen no oil yet.

BILL

Me neither, but I knew a guy once who said he'd seen—

PA

[*Covering his face with his hands and bowing head*]: Oh, my God! Watta life! Watta life!

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE III

[*SCENE: Porch*—POTTER *home.*

It is dusk and a faint glimmer from the street lamp filters through the trees.

MAMIE *is discovered sitting in swinging seat listening to phonograph next door just finishing the song "Let the Rest of the World Roll By." At the conclusion of the piece she buries her head in her arms as if crying.* PA *appears in doorway in back.*]

PA

Why, Mamie, what's the matter, you crying?

MAMIE

[*Wiping eyes hastily*]: N-no, why?

PA

[*Pulling her hands off her face*]: My little girl can't fool me. I guess I know when she's crying.

MAMIE

I wasn't either.

PA

Well, you're lookin' mighty unhappy.

MAMIE

You're not lookin' so happy yourself.

PA

Who? Me?

MAMIE

Yes, you. You've been moping around the house looking like bad news from home ever since you came back from that oil field. What did you find down there? You don't seem to be very happy about it.

PA

Well, I didn't find much, that's the truth. Just some men drillin' a well and I couldn't say they were very enthusiastic.

MAMIE

Well, maybe they're all like that. Maybe that's part of the game to keep you from gettin' too sure.

PA

[*Dubiously*]: Well maybe, but I don't know. It looks bad.

MAMIE

You didn't tell Ma that, did you?

PA

[*Hurriedly*]: I should say not! I told her everything looked fine. What's the use of breaking her up for nothin'?

MAMIE

Well, maybe everything will come out all right. There is oil in Tennessee. I've heard of it.

PA

[*Eagerly*]: Oh, yes, there are oil wells all around that country. And that's what makes me think that maybe there's oil there, after all.

MAMIE

Aren't they drillin'?

PA

Sure, they're drillin'.

MAMIE

Well, maybe they will strike oil.

PA

Well, maybe they will.

MAMIE

[*Puts arm around him*]: I don't think you've got so very much to worry about. I wouldn't holler until I was hurt, anyway. Cheer up.

PA

[*Hugs her*]: You're a good scout, Mamie. I wanted a boy before you was born, but doggone me if you ain't better'n any boy I ever saw. [*Patting her affectionately.*] You're all right.

MAMIE

[*Touched*]: I w-wish some other people thought that.

PA

What do you mean?

MAMIE

[*Turning her back to him*]: N-nothing.

PA

Now, you tell me what's the matter, Mamie. What's the matter with my little girl? Is anybody makin' her unhappy?

MAMIE

It's—it's Red.

PA

[*Flaring up*]: What's he done? Has he done anything to you? I'll break every—

MAMIE

Oh no, no, Pa, it's not that. It's just—we had a fight and he's never come to see me or call me up or anything.

PA

When did you have a fight?

MAMIE

That same night that you told Ma about the oil leases and you went down there to see the well. You know I went to see the medium that day and she told me that Gladys Rankin was tryin' to steal Red away from me, and that very night Gladys comes in with Red, hanging on his arm 'n everything, and I could just tell by looking at them that the medium was right. And then we had words —Red and me, and he went out and I haven't seen him since, and that's a week ago. A whole week! Think of it!

PA

[*Hugs her*]: Oh, I wouldn't worry, he'll come back. He didn't get to be a star fullback by stayin' down every time he was thrown. I've watched Red. He'll be tearin' in here one of these evenin's as if nothin' ever happened.

MAMIE

Oh, no, he won't.

PA

Oh, yes, he will. Well, I think I'll go in and read the paper. I wouldn't worry if I was you. [FRIEND *enters, smoking and leading dog—casual, very casual, as if enjoying stroll in moonlight.*]

FRIEND

Hello Potter!

PA

Hello there, Mac.

FRIEND

Nice night for a stroll.

PA

Sure is. How's tricks?

FRIEND

[*Fading off*]: Just so so. Can't complain.

PA

Thass good . . . . [*To* MAMIE]: You goin' to sit out here awhile?

MAMIE

Yes.

[PA *goes in and* BILL *tears out, tossing carefully arranged cushions around.*]

BILL

Where's my hat, seen my hat anywheres?

MAMIE

How should I know where your hat is? Why don't you put it where you can find it?

BILL

Because I never find it where I put it. What are you settin' the stage for? Got a pettin' party on to-night?

MAMIE

My, you're vulgar.

BILL

Huh! The kettle callin' the pot black. [*Casually*]: Seen Red down the street.

MAMIE

[*Trying to appear unconcerned*]: Oh, did you?

BILL

I told him you wanted to see him.

MAMIE

[*Frantically*]: You didn't! You didn't!

BILL

Well—don't you want to see him? Course you do. You've been moonin' around here for a week like a chicken with the pip.

MAMIE

What did he say when you told him?

BILL

Oh, he said he might drop in to-night.

MAMIE

[*Excited*]: Did he, honest?

BILL

Oh, he said he might. Said he didn't know why he should though, you were actin' awful stiff about somep'n.

MAMIE

Oh, he did, did he?

BILL

I told him that was nothin', you've always got a grouch on about somep'n, he might as well get used to it.

MAMIE

That was sweet of you, wasn't it?

BILL

Don't mention it. Say, that German glider that stays up in the air an hour don't hold no records. You're always up there. That's what I told Red, too.

MAMIE

You're a kind brother, aren't you?

BILL

Oh, that's all right. Red said he'd come here to-night anyway and see what's eatin' you. He ought to be along any time now. I just left him down the street.

MAMIE

[*Hurrying up to arrange cushions*]: You clear out of here when he comes.

BILL

Gosh, I don't want to hang around. [*Starts to go*]: Neckin' ain't no treat to me. I roll my own.

MAMIE

Oh, there he is now. Run quick and let him in. [BILL *exits.*]

RED

[*Entering rather stiffly*]: Hello, there.

MAMIE

Here, let me put it away for you. [*Takes hat and puts it on only remaining chair*]: Won't you sit down?

[*There's nowhere to sit except on the seat beside* MAMIE, *which he does.*]

RED

[*Uneasily*]: Been kind o' warm to-day.

MAMIE

Yes. I've been roasted. But the evenings are cooler, don't you think so?

RED

[*Enthusiastically*]: Oh yes, the evenings are much cooler.

MAMIE

Makes it much better to sleep when the evenings are cool.

RED

Yes, when the nights are hot you can hardly sleep.

MAMIE

It's usually hotter in the daytime than in the evening.

RED

Yes, that's right.

[*Pause, during which the swing squeaks as they swing back and forth.*]

RED

Say, listen.

MAMIE

Yes.

RED

What was the matter with you the other night?

MAMIE

Who, me?

RED

Yes, you. You acted sorta strange, what's the idea? I didn't do anything to you.

MAMIE

Huh! You don't seem to have worried much about it. You seem to be getting plenty of consolation.

RED

Who, me?

MAMIE

Sure, hasn't Gladys been consoling you?

RED

Gladys? Why Gladys is just a friend.

MAMIE

Friend, ha! ha! Friend! Friend, that's good.

RED

Sure, that's all.

MAMIE

Sure, that's what you say.

RED

Honest, dear.

MAMIE

Any old day!

RED

Say, listen, I wouldn't give your little finger for all the Gladys Rankins—why, say, she's nothing in my young life.

MAMIE

[*Softening*]. Sure? Honest? Cross your heart and hope to die?

RED

Honest. Hope to die. You've got her licked to death, with looks and style and everything. [RED *starts to put his arm around her.*]

MAMIE

Be careful, somebody may see us.

[*But this doesn't prevent her from promptly cuddling into his arms.*]

RED

Darn that lamp. Don't you know anybody in the City Hall that would move that thing somewhere else?

MAMIE

[*Softly*]: You know when I saw you come in with Gladys and she lookin' up at you with those sheep eyes and you being so friendly and intimate with her, it made me feel so bad.

RED

Why, I was just being nice to her, that's all. A fellow's got to be nice to a girl, don't he?

MAMIE

Yes, but he don't have to be so darn nice. And the worst of it was it came just after the fortune teller told me that Gladys was trying to come in between us. And then that very night you come in so—so—so friendly as you call it.

[*Begins to sniffle and buries her head in* RED'S *shoulder and sobs.*]

RED

[*Patting her awkwardly*]: There, there, don't cry, please don't cry. You know I wouldn't do anything to hurt you. You know I think more of you than anybody and I always will.

[MAMIE *continues to sob dramatically. A couple pass, strolling in the moonlight.*]

MAN'S VOICE

Gee, it's a swell night.

GIRL'S VOICE

Just heavenly. I love moonlight, don't you?

MAN'S VOICE

Yeh, it's swell. Makes you feel so—so—well, just swell, doesn't it?

GIRL'S VOICE

There's somep'n about moonlight that makes me feel so romantic. It thrills me so I feel as if I wanted to cry sometimes. I don't guess other girls are so silly like that.

MAN'S VOICE

That isn't silly.

GIRL

Oh, yes it is.

MAN

Oh, no it isn't.

[MAN *and* GIRL *fade out with continued, Oh, yes it is, Oh, no it isn't, Oh, yes it is.*]

MAMIE

Even at the house that morning you were having secrets from me—you and Gladys.

RED

Can't you guess what the secret was?

MAMIE

No.

RED

You remember I was comparing your hand with Gladys' and trying your ring on her finger?

MAMIE

Yes.

RED

Well, shut your eyes and give me your hand and I'll tell you the secret.

[MAMIE *does so and* RED *slips solitaire on her finger.*]

MAMIE

[*Opening her eyes and looking at it with a gasp of delight*]: Oh! It's beautiful! Platinum, too.

RED

Do you like it?

MAMIE

Oh, I love it. Our engagement ring! And to think that I could ever have doubted you. [RED *draws her close.*] Wasn't I silly, dear?

RED

I should say you was. [*They kiss.*]

MAMIE

Isn't love wonderful? [*In his arms again.*]

RED

[*Inarticulate*]: Uh, huh.

MAMIE

You do love me, don't you?

RED

Uh, huh.

MAMIE

Why don't you ask me if I love you?

RED

All right, do you?

MAMIE

Do I? I'll say I do.

RED

[*Hugging her close*]: Gee, that's swell.

MAMIE

And we're never going to quarrel any more, are we? When we have our own little home, we'll never, never quarrel, will we?

RED

I should say not. That would be silly, wouldn't it?

MAMIE

Awfully silly. Just because other married people quarrel, we don't have to. We'll be different, won't we, honey?

RED

I'll say we'll be different.

WOMAN'S VOICE

[*Going by*]: Why don't you shave when you go out with me? You used to before we were married. You look like a tramp.

MAN'S VOICE

Aw, what's the difference?

WOMAN

Well, it may not make any difference to you but it does to me.

MAN

Oh, I shaved this morning.

WOMAN

You did not.

MAN

I did too.

WOMAN

Huh!

MAN

I tell you I did.

WOMAN

You didn't.

MAN

Gee whiz! A fellow's beard grows fast in this hot weather.

WOMAN

You look like a tramp.

VOICES

[*Dying away in distance*]: If you haven't got any pride . . . . appearance . . . . did . . . . didn't . . . .

MAMIE

It's those horrid Petersons. They get along together like a couple of strange bull dogs.

RED

Lots of married people are like that. They don't know how to get along because they never give in to each other. If I'm ever in the wrong I'll own up to it, that's the kind of a guy I am.

MAMIE

Oh, but Red, you're so different. If all men were like you—

RED

[*Modestly*]: Oh, no, I'm not so different.

[*The phonograph next door breaks loose with a love song.*]

MAMIE

Oh yes, you are. If you wasn't different I wouldn't love you the way I do. You know I love you, don't you?

RED

[*Uneasily*]: Uh, huh! [*They clinch*]: Gosh, it's a nice night, ain't it?

MAMIE

Swell.

RED

So quiet.

[*Pause.*]

MAMIE

Mother was saying only the other day, "Well, I guess you'll be gettin' married one of these days soon now and leavin' us," and Pa said . . . . but I won't tell you what he said . . . . something about you . . . . I shut him right up I can tell you.

RED

What did he say about me?

MAMIE

[*Coquettishly*]: I won't tell you.

RED

[*Aroused*]: Come on, please tell me.

MAMIE

No, I won't.

RED

Aw, go on. It was about me, wasn't it?

MAMIE

Well, he said—he said—well he said, "Red isn't makin' enough money to get married on. He'll have to have a better job than a life guard before he can have any daughter of mine" . . . but I shut him right up. I stood right up for you. I told him you had a good job in sight and everything.

RED

I have got a good job in sight and we'll get married, too, and I'll tell him so—what do you think o' that?

MAMIE

[*Cooing*]: Oh, Red, you're so masterful. [*Pause, and then softly*]: They say long engagements are awful bad luck. Of course that's only superstition. [*Pause.*] Still, there's lots of truth in those old sayings. [*Pause.*] Red, honey—

RED

Yes, sweetheart.

MAMIE

When are you gonna talk to Pa?

RED

Why should I talk to Pa? I'm not going to marry him. He'll say no, of course.

MAMIE

Oh, I don't think he will.

RED

Oh, yes he will, but that won't make any difference to me. I'll take you right out from under his nose. That's the kind of a guy I am.

MAMIE

Sweetheart!

RED

Darling!

[ANABELLE *and* BILL *turn corner and pause beside house in moonlight. They cannot be seen by* MAMIE *or* RED.]

ANABELLE'S VOICE

There's a light in your living room, Bill.

BILL'S VOICE

That's Pa readin'. Subscribes to all the oil papers now and sits up all night readin' about oil wells. He's gone nuts about it.

ANABELLE

Aren't you afraid he'll see you going by.

BILL

I should worry. [*Kisses her.*] Besides, he can't see me. [*Pause.*] I guess Mamie's got tired waiting for Red and gone to bed.

ANABELLE

I hope they patch up their scrap.

BILL

I hope so too. Life ain't worth livin' around the house when she's fightin' with Red. She's bad enough ordinarily.

ANABELLE

Oh, I think Mamie's sweet.

BILL

It's easy to see, Anabelle, that you ain't her brother.

[*Pause—they continue their stroll.*]

She'll be gettin' married one of these days soon. You can see it in her eye.

ANABELLE

Why, Bill!

BILL

I'd like to be there when Red first tells Pa about it. Hot diggity-dog.
[*They are moving off into the darkness.*]

ANABELLE

Oh, he won't object.

BILL

Oh no! Come right in, the dog won't bite you—much.

MAMIE

[*Enraged*]: That smart Aleck kid brother. Sometimes I wish I was a man for a minute.

RED

Aw, forget it, he's all right. We got other things to think about.

MAMIE

[*Back on the job again*]: Why don't you talk to Pa to-night. He's in the living room now.

RED

[*Feelingly*]: Oh no, it's such a wonderful night.

[*Sound of auto—it stops. Blinding headlight is thrown on lovers in swing. They separate with great speed.*]

RED

Darn those lights.

MAN'S VOICE

Let's park here. This is a good place.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I oughta be getting home. It's getting late.

MAN'S VOICE

Aw, forget it.

MAMIE

We better go inside now, anyway; it's getting late. [*Rising.*] Don't you want to talk to Pa before you go? Pa! Oh Pa!

PA

[*Off stage*]: What do you want?

MAMIE

[*Pushing* RED *along*]: Red wants to see you. [*To* RED]: Go on, he's harmless. Talk right up to him. He won't bite.
[*They open screen door.*]

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE IV

[*SCENE: Living Room—Potter Apartment. Action continues from preceding scene. As the light goes on* PA *can be seen in arm chair, reading paper, looking worried and despondent.*]

PA

[*Aloud*]: Red? Wants to see me? When did he come?

MAMIE

[*Offstage*]: He's been here some time.

PA

What does he want to see me about?

MAMIE

[*Offstage*]: Oh, he'll tell you. He can tell you better himself.

[RED *enters, or is pushed in,* MAMIE *behind him. There is no escape.*]

RED

[*Bravely*]: Good-evening, Mr. Potter.

PA

Why, hello there, Red. Haven't seen you for some time.

RED

That's right, you haven't. I guess—I guess, though, you'll be seeing me a lot more from now on.

PA

[*Genially*]: Well, glad to hear it. [*Going back to his paper*]: I see by the paper here there's a long, hard winter on the way. They say they can tell because the animals grow thicker pelts when it's going to be a hard winter. It's a good idea—I wish I could do it too. I'd save something on the coal bills. Ha! ha!

RED

Yeh, you sure could.

PA

And yet they call 'em dumb animals. They're not so dumb.

RED

[*For whom the coal bill has conjured up new visions of domesticity*]: I—I—I guess I'll have to be worrying about coal bills myself soon now.

PA

[*Who has seen this coming and now begins to get more nervous than* RED]: How do you mean?

RED

[*Hurriedly*]: You know, coal bills—furnace—home—er—er—er—

PA

[*Not a bit of help*]: Yeh, thass right. They usually go together.

RED

And I thought—maybe—perhaps—when—Mamie and me—[*Stuck.*]

PA

Mamie and you? Yes?

RED

[*Struggling*]: We're engaged, you know, and I thought maybe—perhaps—

PA

[*Nervously*]: Engaged?—Who?

RED

[*Desperately*]: Mamie and me. And we thought maybe—perhaps—

PA

[*Equally desperate*]: Maybe—perhaps—yes? [*Throws down paper to right.*]

[*From behind* PA, MAMIE *now signals encouragement to* RED, *who obviously needs it, if an agitated Adam's apple is any index.*]

RED

[*With a superhuman effort*]: It's like this. Mamie and me—we're gonna get married. That is, if you—if you—

PA

Married, er—er—you mean married?

RED

[*Gulping*]: Yes, married. That is, if you don't care.

PA

[*Desperately grappling with the situation now that it has finally arrived*]: But your prospects? Your job? You're a—what is it? A life guard, isn't it?

RED

[*Confused*]: No. You see, the beach is closed now.

PA

[*Gradually getting assurance*]: Then you're an ex-life guard. Surely there isn't much future in that. I can see how you might get through the summer all right, but what would you and Mamie do during the winter; sleep like a couple of bears?

RED

[*With bravado*]: But I have a good job practically cinched. It's in an advertising agency and my father knows one of the directors very well. He's a personal friend. And he knows me too, so of course I'd get in on the ground floor.

PA

[*With the wisdom of experience*]: Yes, but I've discovered that fellows who get in on the ground floor usually wind up in the basement.

RED

[*Eagerly*]: But this is different. Besides, the advertising game is easy to learn. [*Earnestly*]: It must be, there's so many in it.

PA

[*Judicially*]: But you certainly don't expect to get married on the prospect of a job which you might get because your father knows a director in a business in which you have no experience. Got something saved up?

RED

[*Defensively*]: No, I haven't anything saved, but I can work and both of us can save together. Others have done it, why can't we?

MAMIE

[*Who has stayed out of the proceedings as long as she can*]: Of course we can.

PA

[*With hesitant deliberation*]: I don't believe in young folks getting married on a shoestring. They have so much trouble the first year making both ends meet they're too worried to be nice to each other. And then the first thing you know they're scrapping, and blooie goes another marriage on the rocks.

MAMIE

[*Proudly*]: Oh, but we'll be different, won't we, Red? And I can help so much, can't I, Red?

RED

[*Proudly*]: You bet you can.

PA

Well, I wish your mother could hear that. [*To Red*]: I don't want my daughter to marry a man she has to help.

MAMIE

[*Rushing to the defense*]: How about Ma helping you? That's all right, isn't it?

PA

[*Baffled*]: That's different. When we were married things were different. It didn't cost so much to live in those days. Why, you could rent a mighty nice place for ten dollars a month and eggs were only fifteen cents a dozen.

MAMIE

[*With feminine logic*]: I don't like eggs anyway. Do you, Red?

RED

[*Helplessly*]: No, I hate 'em.

PA

[*Enjoying this brief moment of authority—gradually realizing this is the first time he has ever been consulted seriously on a family matter—assumes dictatorial attitude*]: Young man, let me give you a little advice.

MAMIE

Now, Pa.

PA

[*Brusquely*]: Just a minute, please! Young man, I don't believe you realize the importance of this step. You ask to take this little girl whom we have cherished and guarded so tenderly. [*Begins to convince himself and grows sentimental.*] You ask to take her away from her home out into the world to struggle and battle for a—for a—well, to struggle and battle—

RED

[*Interrupting*]: We're not gonna battle.

PA

[*Waving him aside, intent on finishing his oration*]: To struggle and battle out in the world away from her home and her loved ones who

have cherished and guarded her so tenderly. [*Realizes he has somehow got back to where he started, so he desperately makes another start.*] I —well—I don't believe you realize what you are asking me.

MAMIE

[*Practically*]: Of course he does. Don't you, Red? Besides, we love each other and what's the use of talking about rent and the price of eggs and all those silly things? They'll take care of themselves, won't they, Red?

PA

[*Rising with dramatic gesture*]: I am sorry, young man, but before you can get my consent to marry my daughter you must show you are capable of providing for her in the manner to which she has been accustomed. [*Stalks away proudly.*]

MAMIE

[*Calling him back*]: Two can live as cheap as one.

PA

Ha! One what? No, my mind's made up. You can't have my consent.

RED

Why not?

PA

Because you can't support a wife. College boy! Ex-life guard! What kind of a job is that?

RED

I told you I can have a good job as soon as I graduate and besides you can't talk to me as if I was just a kid. I'm a man.

PA

Man! You're just a kid that's too tall for short pants. You marry my daughter! That's a joke.

RED

[*Furiously*]: Oh! a joke, is it? Well, you better start laughing.

PA

Waddye mean?

RED

[*Throws hat on table*]: I mean we're goin' to get married.

PA

You're what?

RED

Just what I said, we're goin' to get married. Mamie loves me and I love her and I can take care of her and I'm goin' to.

PA

[*Stuttering*]: You—you—

RED

Yes, me—me—

MAMIE

Pa, listen.

PA

[*Turning on her*]: What? You keep out of this, young lady.

RED

I asked for your consent, but if you won't give it to me, I'll get along without it.

PA

What do you mean, talking to me like that? Get outa here.

RED

All right, I'll get out.

PA

And you stay away from Mamie, too.

RED

Not so you can notice it.

MAMIE

Pa!

PA

And I've had enough nonsense from you, too, young lady. You give that young scamp his hat and show him the door.

MAMIE

Why Pa! How can you talk to Red like that?

PA

[*Turning on* MAMIE]: Hold your tongue. Will you show him the door or will I have to do it?

RED

Nobody has to show me any door. Good night. See you to-morrow, Mamie.

PA

No, you won't. You show him the door. This is one time I'm goin' to have my way if I die for it. You're not goin' to see her again, and as for marryin' her, I'll chase you to China first.

RED

Well, you may have to start sooner than you expect.

PA

Get out.
[RED *starts for door.*]

MAMIE

[*Tearfully*]: Wait a minute, Red. [*Doorbell rings.*] Who's that? [*Joins* RED *and they talk together excitedly in whispers.*]

MA'S VOICE

[*Offstage*]: Yes, this is the Potter residence. I'll sign for it. [*Enters with telegram.*] Telegram for you, Pa. Shall I open it? [*Opens it while she is asking him*]: Maybe from the oil well. Maybe they struck oil.

PA

[*Eagerly*]: Let's see it. What is it?

MA

[*Reading telegram, then suddenly rushes to him, waving it frantically*]: My God! Look, Pa! Look! [*Reads*]: "Must put up thousand dollars addi-

tional at once to save money invested in leases. Rush. Important. Letter following. Tennessee Oil & Investment Company."

PA

[*Weakly*]: Lemme see it, lemme see it.

MA

[*Ready to cry*]: There, what did I tell you? What are you going to do?

PA

[*Helplessly*]: I don't know.

MA

I told you so. Our four thousand dollars is gone and the mortgage is coming due on our home. We'll be out on the streets. [*Shaking him excitedly*]: We'll be out on the streets—do you hear me?

PA

[*Dazed*]: Yes.

MA

[*Storming*]: Oh, why did you do it, Pa? Why did you do it? Where are those leases? Lemme see those leases. [*Rushes out, pursued by Pa.*]

PA

[*Calling and following her out*]: Wait a minute, Ma.

RED

[*To* MAMIE, *excited*]: C'mon, I tell you.

MAMIE

[*Wringing her hands*]: I can't. I'm afraid.

RED

C'mon, Pa's car's outside. We'll beat it to Crown Point and be married to-night.

MAMIE

But he may catch us.

RED

He won't before we're married, and after that what good will it do him? Sh-h-h, they're coming back. Get your hat and coat—pack your bag. I'll meet you out in the car. Hurry! I'll show him whether I'll marry you or not.

MAMIE

Oh, I'm afraid.

RED

[*Shaking her by the shoulders*]: Lookit here. Do you love me or don't you?

MAMIE

Ye-es, but—

RED

Will you beat it with me now and get married, or won't you? I won't ask you again.

MAMIE

[*Hysterically*]: Ye-es, I will.

RED

All right, outside in Pa's car. Hurry! here they come.

[*Whoosh! out they go, just as* PA *and* MA *come back.*]

PA

[*Dazed*]: I don't know. I don't know. I thought—

MA

[*Bitterly*]: I knew this would happen. You, with all your planning and scheming! Oh, you never did anything yet that came out right. Other

men can do things, other men can make money and succeed, but you—but you—you're a failure.

PA

[*Holding up hand*]: Don't, Ma.

MA

[*Wailing*]: Why did you do it, anyway?

PA

[*Brokenly*]: Why? Why, I did it for you. For you and the children. I wanted you to have the things other women have. I wanted to make everything easier for you. I wanted you to have nice clothes and servants and cars. I wanted to do something for my children like other men do. I—I wanted—oh, what's the use? It was only a dream—you're right—I'm a failure, I'm no good, but honestly, Ma, it was you I had in mind—you and the children. I don't want anything for myself, I wanted to do something for you and I thought this was the chance. And now—well, I'm a failure. You said it.

MA

[*Whimpering*]: I never said anything of the kind.

PA

Yes you did. You're always throwing up other men to me. Always telling me how successful they are, how much smarter they are. There's Rankin. You're always throwing him up to me. Rankin this and Rankin that.

MA

[*Impulsively kneeling beside* PA's *chair and pulling his head over to her shoulder*]: Rankin, that—that—why Pa, I'm glad you're not like Rankin. I'd rather have you without a cent than Rankin with all his trickiness and cunning and lying. Even if he was covered with diamonds.

PA

You're just saying that because you're tryin' to cheer me up, not because you mean it.

MA

I do mean it, dear, every word of it.

PA

No, down in your heart you know I'm a failure, and I am. All my life I've just been missing out.

The only stroke of luck I ever had was getting you. [*Kisses her.*]

MA

Oh, Pa!

PA

There's the office. The years I've been there. Other men have come in below me, worked up to me, gone on over me. I tried to fool myself by saying it was because they had a pull or they were lucky. But that ain't it. They've got something I haven't got. [*Helplessly*]: What is it? They don't work any harder. They don't work as hard. They ain't any more faithful, any more conscientious; but they get there and I don't, and now I know I never will. I'm no good, that's all. I've been a fourflusher and a failure and I finish up by taking all our savings—the money we've struggled for all these years—and I throw it in a hole in the ground.

MA

There, there. Don't you worry. Everything will come out all right. We'll find some way out of it. And no matter what happens, I'll stick right by you. [*Starts suddenly.*] Look! There's a moth. [*Jumps up and begins chasing it around*

the room, slapping her hands together. To Pa]: Come on, help me catch it.

PA

[*Rises wearily, makes one or two ineffectual efforts and then succeeds in trapping moth between his hands. Holds it out to* MA]: Another failure, another Pa Potter.
[*Roar of automobile outside.*]

MA

What's that? [*Rushes to window.*]

PA

Sounds like my car. Somebody stealing it?

MA

It's Mamie and Red.

PA

In my car. They're running away—they're *elopin'*.

MA

Eloping? What? Mamie! *Mamie!*

PA

[*Calls*]: Hey, there! Come back here!

MA

[*Shouting hysterically*]: Mamie! Mamie!

PA

[*To* MA]: I'll chase 'em. I'll catch 'em. I'll chase him to China. [*Catches up hat and rushes out as* MA *stands at open window crying* "Mamie! Mamie!"]

[CURTAIN]

END OF ACT II.

THE POTTERS

ACT III.

THE POTTERS

ACT III: SCENE I

[*SCENE: The interior of a garage which can be seen but dimly. Headlights of a car appear at entrance of the front door, which is center stage back.* MAMIE *is seated in the front seat with* RED, *clinging tenderly to his arm.* RED *is honking the horn vigorously.*]

RED

Hello, hello! [*Honks horn and waits for answer—no response.*] Hello! Hello!

VOICE

[*Out of the darkness*]: Whaddye want?

RED

Hello, hello!

VOICE

Waddye want, huh?

RED

I'm in trouble. [*No answer.*] I said I was in trouble, I want help. [*No answer.*] Hello, hello, hello!

MECHANIC

[*Typical surly brute in greasy overalls emerges from door in the gloom*]: Say, whatsa matter with you?

RED

'Smatter with me, 'smatter with you?

MECHANIC

Waddye want?

RED

Somethin' the matter with my car.

MECHANIC

What is it?

RED

I don't know, how should I know?

MECHANIC

It's your car, ain't it?

MAMIE

No, it belongs to Pa.

MECHANIC

Leave it here, I'll look it over.

RED

But we've got to have it right away.

MECHANIC

Can't have it.

MAMIE

[*Pleading*]: But listen, Mister, please, we must have it. Talk to him, Red, explain it to him.

RED

How do you know we can't have it if you don't even know what's the matter with it?

MECHANIC

Can't have it same day, can't never have cars same day. That's the rule.

RED

[*Wildly*]: But listen, we've gotta have it—we've gotta have it right away.

MECHANIC

[*Shortly*]: All right, take it, there it is.

RED

But we gotta have it fixed.

MECHANIC

Take it somewheres else, we're busy. [*Goes back into gloom.*]

RED

Hello, hello, hello!

MAMIE

[*Half crying*]: Oh, wattle we do, wattle we do? Pa'll be here any minute.

RED

I can't fix it, I don't know what to do.

MAMIE

But we've got to do something, Red, we've just got to. If Pa should catch up with us before we got married I'd just die, I know I would.

RED

[*Barking into the darkness, savagely*]: Hello! Come here, will you?

RED: We've gotta have this car right away.
Act III; Scene I.—*Page 195*

MECHANIC

[*Reappearing, leisurely eating apple*]: Waddye want? [*Starting as if with surprise*]: Oh, you still here?

RED

[*Humbly*]: Listen, old fellow, we've gotta have this car right away. Please look at it, won't you?

MECHANIC

[*Seeming to soften a little bit*]: I seen it. Just ordinary oil can I call it.

RED

I mean won't you look it over and tell me what's wrong with it? It's a cross in the ignition or somethin'.

MECHANIC

[*Elegantly*]: Well, if you know what it is, what the hell you askin' me for?

RED

But I don't know what it is.

MAMIE

No, we don't know what it is. Fix it, won't you please?

MECHANIC

[*Throwing voice into dark void*]: Jack, oh Jack!

VOICE

[*From dark*]: Waddye want?

MECHANIC

Come here, will you, and take a look at this oil can.

VOICE

Ah, t'hell with it, I'm busy.

MECHANIC

[*Proudly*]: See how busy we are. Didn't I tell you? Better take that ice cream freezer somewheres else. [*Starts stalking away.*]

MAMIE

[*Pleadingly*]: Say, mister, please just a minute.

MECHANIC

Yes, ma'am.

MAMIE

We're in terrible trouble. Won't you help us. Please.

MECHANIC

Trouble?

RED

You see, the truth is, we're—we're eloping.

MECHANIC

Trouble—you've only started havin' trouble.

MAMIE

And Pa's after us, I know he is. He saw us start. Oh, if he caught us I'd just die.

MECHANIC

Oh, so the old man's after you, is he?

MAMIE

Oh, I know he is, he was just furious at us. Won't you help us, please.

MECHANIC

[*Gaily*]: Bet your life. We'll give the old boy a run for his money. Let's look at the old coffee mill. [*Raises hood and starts fooling with engine.*]

MAMIE

Oh, you're a darling!

MECHANIC

Oh, thass all right. [*Pause.*] Say, got a fine mess in here.

RED

Whatsa matter?

MECHANIC

Got a crank?

RED

Yes.

MECHANIC

Come here and crank it a minute. [RED *gets out and turns motor over with crank.*] Just as I thought. You got a short. 'Stoo bad, 'stoo bad.

MAMIE

What's the matter?

MECHANIC

Looks like you're here for the night. [*To* RED]: Say, can you drive a Ford?

RED

Never tried it, why?

MECHANIC

Nothin', I just had an idea. I can't fix this car for you and I was goin' to be a sport and let you

have a flivver to finish your elopin' in. [*Thinks a minute*]: Say, I'll tell you what I'll do.

RED AND MAMIE

What?

MECHANIC

I'll drive you over to Crown Point myself.

MAMIE

Oh, you darling!

MECHANIC

Oh, thass all right. We'll get over there in no time. It's only about 20 miles from here, right straight down the road. But say, that Justice won't be there this time of the night. And your license, how about your license. Got your license?

RED

Why, no, I never thought of it.

MECHANIC

[*Disgusted*]: Why, you can't get married without a license, and the court house is closed now.

MAMIE

[*Wailing*]: You have to think of so many things when you're eloping.

MECHANIC

Do you know the clerk there?

RED

No, I don't know him. How should I know him? Gosh, I never eloped before.

MECHANIC

Lemme see—why Jack knows him. He knows the Justice, too. He lives in Crown Point. Say, Jack!

VOICE

[*From the dark*]: Waddye want?

MECHANIC

Come here, I want you.

JACK

[*Entering*]: What's eatin' you?

MECHANIC

Say, you know the County Clerk at Crown Point, don't you?

JACK

Sure, Gus Hawkins.

MECHANIC

You know the Justice, too?

JACK

Ought to know him, I've had him fix things up for enough speeders.

MECHANIC

These are friends of mine. They're elopin' and we got to get the license to-night and get 'em married. They've got a short, so I'm goin' to take them over to Crown Point in the fliver, and while I'm gone you call up Hawkins and have him open up the office and get out one of his best little licenses, and get in touch with the Justice too and tell him it's for some friends of yours. Will you fix 'em up?

JACK

Sure, I'll fix 'em up. I'll fix 'em up for life. [*He goes out to do so.*]

MAMIE

[*Panicky*]: Listen, I hear a car comin'. Listen! [*Noise of car approaching and coming to stop outside garage.*]

PA'S VOICE

[*Outside*]: Hello!

MAMIE

[*To* RED]: It's Pa. Oh, Red!

RED

Hush, he'll hear you.

MECHANIC

Here, duck down, the both of you. Are you sure it's the old man?

MAMIE

[*In tense whisper*]: Yes.

PA'S VOICE

[*At the door*]: Hello!

MECHANIC

[*To* MAMIE *and* RED]: Keep still, I'll take care of him. Hello! Comin' right out.

PA

[*Outside door, to* MECHANIC]: Seen a car go by here with a young fellow and a girl in it?

MECHANIC

'Bout how long ago?

PA

Ten or fifteen minutes.

MECHANIC

Touring car?

PA

Yes.

MECHANIC

Buick or Chalmers, or somep'n like that?

PA

Buick.

MECHANIC

Goin' pretty fast?

PA

They probably was. They'd better go fast. If I catch that good-for-nothing young loafer—I'll . . . .

MECHANIC

Well, I guess I seen 'em all right.

PA

Where, where?

MECHANIC

Right here.

PA

Right here? Right here? Are they here now?

MECHANIC

Do you see that light down there? [*Turns* PA *around.*]

PA

Yes.

MECHANIC

Well, you go straight down the road 'til you come to that light. There's two roads. One goes straight ahead and one bears left.

PA

Yes.

MECHANIC

You take the road that bears left, and you'll give them the surprise of their life.

PA

Thank you, thank you very much!

MECHANIC

Better hurry. Better step on the gas.

PA

I will, don't worry.

MECHANIC

[*As car drives off*]: Don't worry about me worryin'. [*Comes back to* MAMIE *and* RED, *laughing.*] Gee! Thass good! Did you hear us? He's gone down the worst road in the state.

MAMIE

Oh, you darling.

MECHANIC

Oh, thass all right.

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE II

[*SCENE:* Potter's *office the following morning.* Rankin *is seated at a double flat top desk at which he and* Potter *work.* Potter *has not come down yet.* Rankin *is dictating to* Anabelle *at typewriter table.*]

Rankin

[*Pawing over table*]: Where's that Jones file? Why the devil don't you leave things where a fellow can find them?

Anabelle

There it is, right where you left it.

Rankin

Well, then why don't you put things away where they belong?

Bill

[*Entering*]: There's a fellow waitin' to see you outside. [*Waves at* Anabelle. Rankin *catches him and gives them both a dirty look.*]

RANKIN

[*To* ANABELLE]: Why didn't you tell me so before? Who is it?

BILL

Eagle.

RANKIN

Eagle, Eagle? Of course. Show the bird in.

BILL

[*Laughs mirthlessly*]: Ha! Ha! Joke!

RANKIN

No, wait, I'll go and see him. [*Exit.*]

[BILL *and* ANABELLE *are obviously glad to be together, yet fearful that* PA *or* RANKIN *will come in and catch them.*]

ANABELLE

Where's your Pa this morning?

BILL

Gosh, he was out chasin' Mamie and Red last night.

ANABELLE

What?

BILL

Yes, they eloped.

ANABELLE

Oooh! Isn't that wonderful!

BILL

Huh! Wait 'til he catches 'em. Say, listen.

ANABELLE

What?

BILL

You know that was a stingy little kiss you gave me last night.

ANABELLE

Well, that's all you're gonna get. [*Turns away.*]

BILL

Is zat so? [*Grabs her suddenly. She retreats back of desk, upsetting phone. She picks up transmitter,* BILL *grabs dangling receiver and promptly takes advantage of situation to steal kiss.*]

BILL

[*With exaggerated rapture as* ANABELLE *feigns astonishment*]: What is this strange power I have over women.

[*Door opens suddenly and* RANKIN *and* EAGLE *come in, surprising* BILL, *who scurries out.*]

EAGLE

Where's Potter? Mr. Potter coming down this morning?

ANABELLE

Well he's pretty late now. I hardly think so. He may be down this afternoon.

EAGLE

Will you tell him to call me at this number. [*Hands her a card.*]

ANABELLE

Surely.

EAGLE

Thank you. Well, well. [*Sits down at desk and hands* RANKIN *a cigar*]: Have a smoke. You know we have done pretty nicely in this oil business.

RANKIN

[*To* ANABELLE]: You may go till I call you. [ANABELLE *hurries out.* BILL *being in the outer office may have something to do with her haste.*] [*To* EAGLE]: I should say we have. [*Reflectively*]: Yes, we've both made some money.

EAGLE

[*Casually*]: Has Potter done any squealing?

RANKIN

No, but he looks pretty glum when you say oil to him.

EAGLE

Well, he'll look glummer this morning.

RANKIN

Why?

EAGLE

He got a notice last night of a thousand dollar extra assessment.

RANKIN

Extra assessment, why?

EAGLE

Oh, that's a secret, I'll tell you later. Potter might come in.

RANKIN

No, as long as he's this late he'll probably be much later.

EAGLE

Oh well, it's all in a life time. If we didn't take him somebody else would. You know the

old saying—there's a sucker born every minute and two wise ones to take him. Potter's the sucker—you and I are the wise ones. That's life, and we might just as well be philosophical about it and accept it as it is.

RANKIN

Yes, I guess that's right.

EAGLE

Speaking of Potter reminds me I still have the check you gave me when we put that deal over on him. Your buying leases too, sure fooled Potter.

RANKIN

I've still got 'em too, don't you want 'em?

EAGLE

Oh, you might just as well give them to me.

[RANKIN *takes leases out of his pocket and hands them to* EAGLE *and* EAGLE *hands him check after he has carefully pocketed the leases.*]

RANKIN

[*Tearing up check*]: Well, that's that. You haven't told me why you soaked Potter a thousand extra assessment.

EAGLE

Why, that's to scare him out so he'll be glad to sell his leases.

RANKIN

I don't understand.

EAGLE

Oh yes, that's right, you don't know it yet, do you?

RANKIN

Know what?

EAGLE

[*Rising quietly*]: Why, we struck oil down there on that property.

RANKIN

WHAT! You're kidding me.

EAGLE

Oh, am I? Look at this. [*Hands* RANKIN *telegram.*] I got that yesterday. You see I couldn't remember to tell you until I got these leases from you. They sort of reminded me. [*Edges toward door.*]

RANKIN

[*Excitedly*]: Here, give those leases back to me. You sold them to me.

EAGLE

[*Suavely*]: Don't be so impetuous. You gave them back to me.

RANKIN

But you tricked me.

EAGLE

Well, well.

RANKIN

You—you crook, you.

EAGLE

It begins to look as if I wasn't welcome here any more. [*Picks up hat*]: Well, as the old saying goes, here to-day and gone to-morrow. [*Mincing out*]: Good day.
[ANABELLE *enters.*].

RANKIN

That crook, that low down double crossing crook.

ANABELLE

Well, what did he do?

RANKIN

Oh, nothing, nothing. [*Half to himself*]: Maybe he was lying. Maybe it's not on my leases at all. He wanted to get in touch with Potter. Maybe it's on Potter's leases. He's going to try to buy Potter's leases before . . . .

ANABELLE

[*Puzzled*]: Why, what are you talking about?

RANKIN

[*Savagely*]: Nothing, nothing.

[*Door opens.* PA *enters looking tired and haggard.*]

PA

[*Dispiritedly*]: Hello. [*Hangs hat on tree.*]

RANKIN

[*With unusual enthusiasm*]: Hello Potter, hello, how are you? Why, what's wrong?

PA

Everything. It's all wrong.

[*Sits down slowly at his desk, picks up letter, seems to be reading it. Then suddenly comes to and turns it right side up.* ANABELLE *proceeds to straighten up his desk. It is evident she likes him much better than* RANKIN.]

ANABELLE

Can I do anything for you, Mr. Potter?

PA

[*Vaguely*]: No, thank you.

RANKIN

Get that memo out, will you? Say, Potter; you know those leases.

[PA *waves at him as if waving the subject away—telephone rings—picks up receiver.*]

PA

What? Oh yes. Yes, Ma. Haven't heard a word from them. Yes, I'll let you know just as soon as I hear from them. What did you say? Some fellow called up about the leases? What did he want? Oh, he wants to talk to me? Well,

if he calls again tell him to call me at the office. All right. Yes, at the office.

RANKIN

[*Sits at desk facing* PA *and tries to suppress his excitement*]: I know who that fellow was. He's the same fellow that was asking me if you would part with some of your leases. I think he wants to buy them.

PA

[*As if the idea was percolating slowly*]: Er—wants to buy some leases?

RANKIN

I think you could sell him some of yours if you wanted to.

PA

[*As if struck by a sudden thought*]: How did he know I had leases?

RANKIN

I told him.

PA

Why didn't you sell him some of yours?

RANKIN

[*Stalling*]: I don't know—don't you want to sell?

PA

[*Cautiously*]: Well — I might. What's his proposition?

RANKIN

Oh, he'll give you what you paid for them.

PA

And will he pay the extra assessment? You know I got assessed an extra thousand dollars.

RANKIN

[*Cautiously*]: Yes—I guess he'd even do that, too. [*Eagerly*]: Well, is it a go?

PA

[*Slowly*]: Wait a minute. I want something for all the grief that stuff's given me. I should think about—let's see—about a thousand dollars would be right.

RANKIN

Why man, that's ridiculous—a thousand dollars profit for a handful of paper that's already cost

you a thousand dollars beside what you paid for it originally—why you're crazy!

PA

Well, all right, I'm crazy, but I want to be paid for it. A thousand dollars or nothin'.

RANKIN

You're nutty, what's got into you, anyway?

PA

[*To* ANABELLE]: Will you take a letter please? Francis H. Evans—you'll find his address on the letter head here—My dear Mr. Evans—Yours of the 16th received—

RANKIN

[*Interrupting*]: Say, what about our deal?

PA

Deal's off. [*To* ANABELLE]: and contents noted. Will say in reply—

RANKIN

Have you gone nuts?

PA

Have you gone nuts?—No, don't put that in the letter— [*To* RANKIN]: A thousand dollars profit or nothin'. Don't bother me any more about it. I'm not in the mood to be trifled with this morning.

RANKIN

All right, then; but you're a hard bargainer, Potter.

PA

It pays to be hard in this world. The harder you are the less likely people are to take a wallop at you.

BILL

[*Sticking head in the door, motioning* ANABELLE]: Psst! [*Catches sight of* PA *and disappears hurriedly.*]

ANABELLE

[*To* PA]: Shall we finish the letter later.

PA

Yes.

[ANABELLE *disappears, almost magically.*]

RANKIN

[*Writes out check*]: Here's your check for five thousand. I'll take care of the extra assessment myself. Here's four thousand you paid for the leases and an extra thousand clear profit. Have you got the leases here?

PA

[*Takes them from pocket*]: Here they are.

RANKIN

You can just make them over to me and I'll make them over to my friend.

PA

[*Signing papers*]: All right, here you are.

RANKIN

Well, here's your money. Let's see what you have there.

PA

Here's the four thousand dollars worth of leases I bought from Eagle and here's—[*Holding up a smaller package*]—the ones Eagle threw in for luck. Do you want them, too?

RANKIN

[*Eagerly*]: You bet!

PA

No, I guess I'll keep them for luck. There might be some oil there—wouldn't that be funny? Ha! Ha!

RANKIN

C'mon, let me have them. There isn't any oil there.

PA

Well, maybe not, but I'll just keep them for luck. There might be some oil there. Wouldn't that be funny? [*Laughs.*] Ha! Ha!

RANKIN

[*Laughing mirthlessly*]: Yes, ha! ha! [*Telephone rings. Rises.*] I'll be back in a minute —takin' these over to my safety deposit. Come on, let me have those other leases, Potter. Be a sport. [*Telephone rings second time.*]

PA

No, they're my luck. Go on. You've got what you paid for.

RANKIN

But listen, Potter, listen.

PA

Forget it. [*On the telephone*]: Oh, is that you, Ma? Yes, what? You heard from them? [RANKIN *goes out hatless.*] Where are they? What? Married? Forgive them? They do? I should think they would. Oh, you did, did you? Who, me? Well, I'm not so sure I will. What? *WHAT?* To-night? Our house? Well, for the love of Mike. [*Pause.*] Yes, yes. Well, I don't know. [ANABELLE *enters.*] I'll know more about it after I see 'em to-night. Yes, Good-bye . . . . tell you all about it to-night . . . . Good-bye . . . .
[PA *hangs up with perturbed look on his face.*]

ANABELLE

What's the matter, Mr. Potter? You don't look well. Are you sick, or worried, or somep'n?

PA

[*Despondently*]: I don't know what to do.

ANABELLE

Why, what's wrong?

PA

It's my daughter.

ANABELLE

[*Genuinely alarmed*]: Is she ill?

PA

Worse than that. She's eloped.

ANABELLE

[*Thrilled*]: Isn't that romantic! [*Breathlessly*]: Just like in the movies. You know I saw one the other night where Gloria Swanson was in love with a fellow and her father didn't want her to marry him . . . .

PA

Yes, I know all about it. And they eloped, isn't that it?

ANABELLE

Oh yes, yes.

PA

And the father, like a darn fool, went chasin' after them.

ANABELLE

Oh yes, yes. Did you see it?

PA

No, I was the darn fool.

ANABELLE

[*Uncomprehending*]: Oh, I don't understand.

PA

I don't either. I know Mrs. Potter just called up and said they are coming to the house to-night to beg my forgiveness.

ANABELLE

Oh, you're going to forgive them, aren't you?

PA

Forgive them? I ought to break every bone in their bodies, both of them.

ANABELLE

Oh, they're in love. I think it's wonderful.

PA

I think it's nuts. [*Telephone rings.*] Yes—yes, this is Mr. Potter—Oh—Oh! but I sold them. Yes—to Rankin—just now. What? Hello, hello,

hello— [Pa *hangs up with puzzled expression, turns to* Anabelle *and* Bill, *who entered during conversation*]: He hung up on me.

Anabelle and Bill

Who?

Pa

Eagle. He wanted to buy my leases and when I told him I sold to Rankin he hung up on me.

Bill

You sold them?

Anabelle

Did you say you sold them to Rankin?

[Rankin *enters from behind—unseen—for his hat on tree.*]

Pa

[*Gleefully*]: Yes, Rankin. Foxy Rankin—and that ain't the best of it. He paid me a thousand dollars extra for them.

Anabelle

No!

Bill

Ho! ho! the big simp.

Pa Perrin: Forgive them? Well, I don't know.
Act III; Scene II.—*Page 223*

PA

[*Gloating*]: Yeh. And Rankin thinks he's a smart guy. Ain't that rich? Ha! ha! Say, there ain't any oil within a thousand miles of that place. [RANKIN *laughs noiselessly.*] And Rankin thinks there's oil there. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

BILL

The poor fish.

[*All laugh, and* RANKIN, *who is screened from* PA, *laughs more heartily than the rest.*]

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE III

[*SCENE*: Potter *Living Room. Evening of the same day.* Ma *discovered feverishly straightening up room, glancing at clock as if expecting someone. Arranging fresh flowers on table, etc.*]

Pa

[*Enters, smoking cigar, evening paper in hand*]: Hello, Ma. Say, I want to read the evening paper. Let me come in, will you?

Ma

[*Giving finishing touch to flowers*]: All right, but don't disturb anything.

Pa

[*Stepping in gingerly, evidently in high spirits, which seems to puzzle* Ma]: Flowers! New table, too! Well, well, well!

Ma

[*Indicates tobacco jar on table*]: Here, put this away.

PA

What's all this fussin' and stewin' about?
[*Wanders around room with tobacco jar and finally puts it back on the table.*]

MA

[*Dusting furniture*]: Why Pa, have you forgotten, they're coming to-night.

PA

[*With elephantine humor*]: All this fussin' for those two? Darn foolishness, I call it. [*Settles himself in chair.*] Always thought that story about the prodigal son had about as much sense to it as the rest of those proverbs. The prodigal son! Goes out and hells around and spends all his money and then when he comes back they throw a banquet for him. And who pays for it? The son who stayed home and worked his head off. And that's supposed to be a highly moral story. It don't make sense. Like most of them darn proverbs that they're always trying to get people to live up to.

MA

[*Looks around and picks up tobacco jar, absently handing it to* PA *again*]: Here, put this away.

[Pa *wanders around the room again with tobacco jar.*]

Pa

Proverbs . . . . the wisdom of the ages!—All bunk! One of them says "look before you leap" and another one says "he who hesitates is lost." [*Puts down jar in same place again and sits down.*]

Ma

Don't you spill any of those ashes on the rug. I wish you'd quit smoking in this room anyway. It smells up the curtains.

Pa

And one of them says: "Everything comes to him who waits" and the next one says "Let us then be up and doing." Who you gonna believe? It's all bunk in this world. All lies. [*Gestures with cigar, spilling ashes on rug.*]

Ma

There! I told you you'd get it on the rug.

Pa

[*Rubbing it in with his foot*]: Oh, it's good for the moths. [*Aside*]: Another lie. It's all lies.

Don't go in the dark room the boogie man will get you. It's a lie. There ain't any boogie man. Eat the crusts, they'll make your hair curly! Tain't so! Work and save your money and you'll get rich. Yes, you will. Be good and you'll be happy. [*Laughs derisively.*] Try it.

MA

[*Sitting down and regarding* PA *with a puzzled air*]: Why, Pa, what's the matter with you this evening. You act so—so different—so happy—that isn't like you.

PA

[*Airily*]: Oh, never mind. Every dog has his day. Even a husband and father can be happy once in a while. Not often, of course, but on occasions—[*After a pause*]—like this for instance.

MA

[*Baffled*]: Why, what's happened, did you get a raise?

PA

[*Jovially*]: Ask me no questions, I'll tell you no lies. Go ahead and fix things up for those two young scamps.

MA

I won't have you talking about those two children that way. Scamps!

PA

Children! Nothing very childish about the way they've defied us so far. [*Reflectively*]: After all I've done for that girl. And then for her to have the nerve to come right back here and bring that red-headed—red-headed—[*Words fail him.*]

MA

Where else would she come if not to her own home and her own mother and father? Besides, she isn't any criminal. She hasn't done wrong. [*Interrupts* PA's *attempt to speak*]: Oh, I'm not saying that I wasn't hurt by her running away like that and getting married, but it's done, and it isn't as if he wasn't a fine boy; for he is.

PA

Fine boy!

MA

Well, he is. He's got spirit and I admire that in a man. He'll get somewhere in the world because he isn't afraid to go after what he wants

and take it. [*Pa winces.*] That's the kind of a man that a woman loves. [*Tenderly*]: It's a wonderful thing to be a girl and young like Mamie, married to the man you love, with all your life before you.

PA

[*Touched*]: Now Ma, don't start gettin' mushy. I'm not gonna be soft-soaped about this thing. I'm sore and I'm gonna let them know it, too. That young red-headed devil can't take a daughter of mine from right under my nose and lead me a wild goose chase all over the state in the middle of the night . . . . [MA *snickers.*] What are you laughin' about?

MA

Was I laughing? I'm sorry.

PA

And then have the infernal gall to come back here the very next day, married to my daughter, and expect me to throw my arms around him and kiss him. Huh! You can't help admire a crust like that.

[*Doorbell rings.*]

PA

Who's that?

MA

It's her.

PA

It's him.

MA

It's *them.* [*Rushes to door.*]

[*Sounds in hall of excited greeting.* PA *fidgets nervously.*]

MA

[*Backing in and speaking as if to someone in hall*]: You wait here just a minute. [*Turns to* PA]: Now, Pa, it's Mamie and Red, and they look so happy. Don't you say anything harsh now. Oh Pa, they make a lovely couple. I won't have you scolding them. Understand now.

PA

[*Irritably*]: Oh, very well, very well.

MA

[*Aloud*]: It's all right. Come on in.

[MAMIE *and* RED *enter.* RED *with his arm around* MAMIE, *friendly but independent.*]

MAMIE

[*Rushing to* PA *and throwing her arms around him*]: Oh Pa, I'm so happy.

RED

[*Extending hand*]: Shake hands with your new son-in-law, Pa.

[MAMIE *takes* PA'S *hand and* RED'S *and joins them, in spite of considerable resistance on* PA'S *part.*]

MAMIE

[*Coyly*]: There! I just knew you'd be friends . . . . [*To* PA]: Ain't you gonna wish us happiness.

PA

Well, I'll say I don't think it's much use wishin' anything for you two. If there's anything you want bad enough you'll probably go after it and take it.

MA

[*Embracing* MAMIE]: Married! I never hoped to see the day my daughter would be married.

PA

[*Decisively*]: Well, I did. But I didn't think it was going to happen so all of a sudden like.

RED

Well Pa, I think we'll get along together all right, don't you?

MAMIE

I just know we will. And we're so happy. Aren't we, Red, dearest? And we're all going to be so happy here together. [*Throwing off coat and hat.*]

PA

[*Alarmed*]: Here—together? What?

MAMIE

Why, didn't Ma tell you?

PA

[*To* MA]: Tell me what . . . . what is it?

MA

[*Confused*]: Why you see . . . . why—well—the truth is the dear children have no place to go just now . . . . they got married sorter sudden, you know . . . .

PA

[*Grimly*]: Yes, I know.

MA

And they thought . . . . I thought . . . . we thought . . . . that maybe perhaps . . . . they could . . . . well, stay here with us until they get settled.

PA

My God!

MA

Oh, we've got room . . . . that is, we can make room . . . . we could let them have our room for a little while . . . .

PA

What's goin' to happen to me?

MA

[*Happily*]: Oh, I have a suprise for you. [*Lifts the top of apparently innocent library table and it unfolds into perfectly ghastly bed.*] Look! There, isn't that fine?

PA

What's that for?

MA

Why, for you. Aren't your surprised?

PA

[*Paralyzed*]: For me? Surprised! That's putting it mildly.

MA

Now Pa, you don't have to be nasty.

MAMIE

[*Crying*] Well, if we're not welcome here we can go.

RED

[*Angrily*]: Come on, let's go. I told you your plan was all rot. C'mon.

MA

[*Weeping*]: You'll do nothing of the kind.

MAMIE

Yes, we'll go. We'll go out in the cold world. But I didn't think you were so heartless, Pa.

MA

You'll not stir out of this house. [*To* PA, *defiantly*]: If Mamie goes, I go too.
[MAMIE *sobs and* MA *joins her.*]

PA

[*Pathetically*]: Gosh a mighty, Ma, I can't sleep in that damn thing. Have a heart!

MA

But they've got to sleep—to—[*Stops embarrassed*]—well, you ought to be willing to do something for—for them.

PA

[*Suddenly*]: I tell you what I'll do—I'll give them enough to go on a regular honeymoon. [*Goes to bed and counts out four hundred dollars from roll.*]

MAMIE

[*Happily*]: Well, well, Pa, that's the spirit.

RED

[*Admiringly*]: Well now, say, that's the alligator's adenoids.

PA

No, that's the father-in-law's spinal column. Here. Here's four hundred dollars. Bless you, my children. On your way.

MA

[*Round eyed*]: Why, where did you get all that money? Lemme see it. [*Reaches for roll.*]

PA

[*Grandly, but backing away*]: Just a minute. Be more respectful. Gaze upon Peter E. Potter, the financial genius, the wizard of Wall Street.

MA

Why Pa, of all things!

MAMIE

[*Throwing her arms around* PA]: Why Pa, you wonderful old thing!

RED

[*Shaking hands with him warmly*]: Well, well, well! [PA *tries to get hand away from* RED'S *vigorous pumping.*] Well, well, well!

PA

[*Seriously*]: Now, Red. You've got my daughter. You're gonna be good to her, ain't you?

RED

Yes, Pa. May I call you Pa?

PA

You might just as well start now. And Red, remember, I didn't give you my daughter—you took her—but that's all right now. It's up to you to make her happy.

RED

I'll try, Pa.

PA

Well, don't think it's going to be easy for the two of you. There'll be times you'll get on each others' nerves and hate each other.

RED AND MAMIE

Oh, no we won't.

PA

Oh, yes you will! But remember that all young couples go through it, and things you'll cry over to-day you'll laugh about to-morrow. The happy marriage is where each side is ready to give just a little more than it takes. [*Apologetically to* MA]: I know this sounds terribly preachy and old fashioned, but after all, marriage is an old game that has to be played according to the old rules, and cheatin' in marriage is like cheatin' at solitaire. [MAMIE *and* RED *nod to each other.*] And now go, my boy, and work hard and set up a home of your own for Mamie and yourself, and your children and your children's children. [MA *pulls tail of* PA's *coat.*]

MAMIE

[*Practically*]: But Pa, you forgot, we're comin' back and live here after our honeymoon.

PA POTTER—Gosh, Ma, I can't sleep on that damn thing.
Act III: Scene III —*Page 239*

PA

[*Baffled*]: That's—that's right, I forgot.

RED

[*Bravely*]: Oh, it won't take me long to get on that job and get going.

PA

[*Jocosely*]: Well, I'll say if you take a job and go with it like you took Mamie . . . . Here, [*As if suddenly remembering, takes remaining oil leases out of his pocket*]: Here's a wedding present. A few of my oil leases. Bless you, my children.

MA

Why Pa, if you meant that for a joke, I think that's pretty mean.

PA

[*With great good nature*]: Oh, maybe it ain't a joke. Maybe there's oil there, who knows?

MA

[*Exasperated*]: Say, you're feeling entirely too happy. You've got something up your sleeve.

[*As if suddenly struck by an idea, turning him around*]: Say, you don't mean to tell me there's really oil there? Is that where you got all that money?

PA

[*Humming*]: Tra-de-da-da-da-da.

MA

[*Following him*]: Talk to me. What is it, tell me.

PA

[*Airily*]: I refuse to answer on advice of counsel, as anything I may say might tend to incriminate or degrade me. [*Sings*]: Tra, la, la, la, la.

RED

[*To* MAMIE]: Come on, let's go and have a honeymoon on Pa's four hundred. [*Pocketing oil leases.*] Every little bit helps. If we strike oil I'll send you a can. Come on, Mamie.

MA

Why Red—Mamie—you're not going now.

RED

Sure, better late than never. The best time to have a honeymoon is right after you're married.

MA

Why—why—you can't leave us like this.

PA

[*Trying to fold up library table bed*]: Now Ma, that's all right. What do you suppose I let them have the money for? [*Closes up table bed with decisive snap.*] Sure, g'wan, have your honeymoon!

RED

[*Decisively*]: Come on, let's go. See you later, folks.

[MA *and* MAMIE *kiss.* RED *shakes hands with* PA. MAMIE *and* MA *hug again.* RED *shakes hands with* PA *again.*]

RED AND MAMIE

Good-bye—good-bye.

MA AND PA

[*Waving at door*]: Good-bye. Good-bye.

PA

[*Slipping down into easy chair and starting to take off shoes*]: And that's that! Watta life, watta life!

MA

Now, you're not taking off your shoes in the living room!

PA

Say, I've been waitin' for years for Mamie to go so I could do this. [*Pause, as he regards bed triumphantly.*] Well, at least I don't have to sleep in that damn thing to-night, thank God!

MA

I can't realize it. My little girl married and gone away from me on her honeymoon . . . . Oh, I hope she'll be happy. [*Sees* MAMIE's *glove. Picks it up and sits down in chair, holding it in her hand. To* PA *who is slipping out carrying his shoes*]: Where you going, Pa?

PA

I'm goin' out in the kitchen to get somep'n to eat.

MA

[*Calling after him*]: Say, don't forget to lock the back door.

PA'S VOICE

All right.

MA

And Pa!

PA'S VOICE

What is it?

MA

Be sure and empty the pan under the icebox. [MA *holds up glove and looks at it for a minute. Kisses it and begins to cry softly.*]

BILL

[*Dashing in, waving paper*]: Look! Look!

MA

[*Alarmed*]: What is it? What's the matter?

BILL

Look at this. Big oil well near El Dorado, Tennessee. That's where Pa went.

MA

El Dorado, Tennessee? Let me see it. [*Grabs paper from* BILL *and is evidently reading it with great excitement.*] Pa, Oh Pa!

PA'S VOICE

What do you want now?

MA

Come here, Pa, quick, quick!

PA

[*Enters with mouth full of food, looking very comfortable and satisfied.*] What is it? What do you want?

MA

[*Excited*]: Look Pa, we're rich. Look!

PA

[*Bewildered*]: Rich? Rich? What are you talkin' about?

MA

Listen, listen! Listen to this. [*Reads*]: "El Dorado, Tennessee, Special. Oil has been struck today three miles southwest of El Dorado where The Tennessee Oil & Investment Company has been drilling a well for the past few weeks. Oil men say it is one of the largest gushers that has ever been tapped in this country. It is understood that the leases on this property are held by a syndicate of Chicago business men."

PA

[*Utterly dumbfounded*]: Why—why—lemme see it. [*Bends over paper and reads it, following lines with trembling fingers.*]

MA

[*Almost hysterical with joy*]: Oh Pa, Pa, we're rich. Think of it! [*She goes on, heedless of the expression of despair which is growing more pitiful on* PA's *face.*] Rich! Oh, I've dreamed of it, but I never thought it would come true. No more scraping and struggling to keep up appearances. No more pinching and saving to meet gas bills, electric light bills, installments on furniture. Now we can have new furniture. I've always wanted a big overstuffed suite for the living room. Won't Mrs. Rankin be jealous. [BILL *does Indian dance.*] And rugs, real Oriental rugs. And real pictures, painted by hand. And we can afford to have lace shades and I can get that kitchen cabinet I always wanted and an electric ironer. [*Turning to* PA, *almost weeping with joy*]: And I owe it all to you. And to think that I said you never would succeed. Oh Pa, how can you ever forgive me.

PA

[*Miserably*]: Whuh, whuh . . . .

MA

[*Noticing for the first time the look of horrified dismay on* PA's *face*]: Why Pa, what's the matter? Has the shock been too much for you?

PA

[*Miserably*]: No, no. [*Buries his face in his hands and moans*]: Oh, my God!

MA

[*Alarmed*]: What's the matter? What's the matter?

PA

I—I can't tell you.

MA

[*More alarmed than ever*]: What is it? What's the matter?

PA

We're not rich, Ma.

MA

[*Bewildered*]: Why, why, why? Look, look here in the paper.

PA

[*Weakly*]: Yes, yes, I know, I know, but—Ma, listen—dont' cry, Ma, but listen. I—I sold those leases.

MA

[*Sinking into chair helplessly*]: What—you—sold—

PA

Yes—the leases—to Rankin.

MA

[*Wailing*]: Oo-oooh!

PA

[*Miserably*]: He came to the office to-day and offered me all I paid for them and a thousand dollars more. I didn't tell you before, but that's what I was so happy about all evening. I'd been down there, Ma, to the oil field and they told me there wasn't any oil and never would be. And it looked like Providence — him coming along and offering me not only what I paid but a thousand dollars more—why, that's nearly half as much as we've saved in fifteen years, Ma.

MA

[*Sobbing*]: Oh Pa, why did you do it? Why do we always have to lose out, always, always?

PA

[*Miserably*]: No matter what I do, it's wrong. No matter how hard I try, I fail. We could have

had everything and I throw it away for a miserable thousand dollars. Everything — success, wealth, comfort, happiness. I've let it all slip through my fingers. And who gets it? A scoundrel, a cheat like Rankin. I work hard and try to do what's right for my family and this is what happens. [*Enraged*]: What's the use of tryin' to do what's right—what's the use of tryin' to be fair and square. [*Bitterly*]: Be good and you will be happy — what a lie, what a terrible damn lie.

MA

[*Brokenly*]: Pa, oh Pa! Why did you do it? [*Sobs.*]

[*Door bursts open and* RED *and* MAMIE *rush in.*]

RED

[*Waving newspaper frantically*]: Look! Look!

PA

[*Dully*]: Yes, yes, I know all about it. Oil, oil, oil.

RED

But man alive — what's the matter with you? Aren't you glad?

PA

[*In despair*]: Glad? I wish I was dead.

MAMIE

But Pa, listen. [*Slaps his back.*]

RED

Yes, listen, [*Reads*]: "Oil men say it's one of the largest gushers that's ever been tapped in this country. It is understood that the leases on this property are held by a syndicate of Chicago business men."

PA

[*Miserably*]: I know, I know.

RED

[*Waving him aside*]: But listen. [*Reads*]: "This gusher is located on what is known as the Frank Winter Farm." [*Holds up leases.*] Here, here, look! You gave me these. Here they are—leases on 320 acres belonging to Frank Winter. The oil well is on it. It's mine.

PA

[*Gradually coming to life*]: What! Then I didn't sell the oil well to Rankin?

RED

[*Excitedly*]: Rankin hell—here it is. Look at it.

[*Grabs* MAMIE *and dances around room with her.*]

PA

[*Still utterly baffled*]: And I—I—I gave my oil well to you?

RED

You sure did!

PA

[*Blankly*]: My God!

BILL

[*Amazed*]: Waddye think o' that?

MA

Why Pa, don't you understand, they're rich. The Rankins didn't get the oil well, after all. Mamie and Red got it. [*Hysterically*]: Oh, I can't stand this. [*Starts to blubber.*]

PA

[*Looking at her amazed*]: What the devil you cryin' about now?

MAMIE

[*Comforting her*]: There, there, you're all excited.

RED

Well, she's not the only one that's excited.

PA

[*Dully*]: Well, you ought to be excited, you're rich.

RED

[*Gaily*]: You said I'd never amount to anything, didn't you? Well, look me over. You have a millionaire son-in-law. You see you were wrong.

PA

[*Crushed*]: Yes, you're rich.

RED

No, you're wrong again.

PA

[*Baffled*]: What do you mean?

RED

I mean we're all rich. You don't think I'd take this and not share it with you and Ma, do you?

MA

[*Throwing her arms around* RED]: God bless you!

MAMIE

[*Throwing her arms around* PA]: Oh Pa, you wonderful old thing.

MA

[*Hugging* PA, *as* MAMIE *and* RED *clinch*]: Pa, I'm so proud of you.

BILL

Gee whiz! You're all getting mushy. I'm going to bed.
[*Stalks out.*]

RED

Come on Mamie, let's be off on our honeymoon.

PA

Off, off? [*Grandly*]: You'll do nothing of the kind. I couldn't think of letting you go away to-night. To-morrow maybe, all right, but to-night this house is yours.

MA

Sure, sure, they can have our room, can't they, Pa.

PA

You bet. And anything else they want. [*To* RED]: Here, have a cigar. [*Shakes hands with him nervously.*] Well, well, and to think that I've a millionaire son-in-law. Well, well, well.

[*Begins to stand in awe of* RED *now that he has money.*]

MA

Well, I'll get busy and fix up this bed for us, Pa. [*Opens up table again.*] I got to get some sheets and pillow cases and covers.

MAMIE

Let me go and get 'em for you, Ma. You're tired.

MA

All right, dear—and while you're about it—you may as well bring a comforter.

MAMIE

I don't think I can carry all that. [*Looking at* RED, *meaningly.*]

RED

I'll help you.

[*Goes out with* MAMIE, *holding her hand.* PA *sits on edge of it and bounces up and down.*

PA

My God! What a terrible bed! I know I'll wake up in the morning with a permanent wave in my spine. [*Yawning*]: Gosh, I'm tired. I wish they'd hurry back with those clothes so I could roll in.

MA

[*Puzzled*]: Pa, how did you ever happen to hang onto those oil leases?

PA

[*Proudly*]: Well, I ain't such a terrible dumbbell after all—am I?

MA

[*Hugging him*]: Didn't I always tell you you'd be a great success some day?

CURTAIN

END OF THE PLAY